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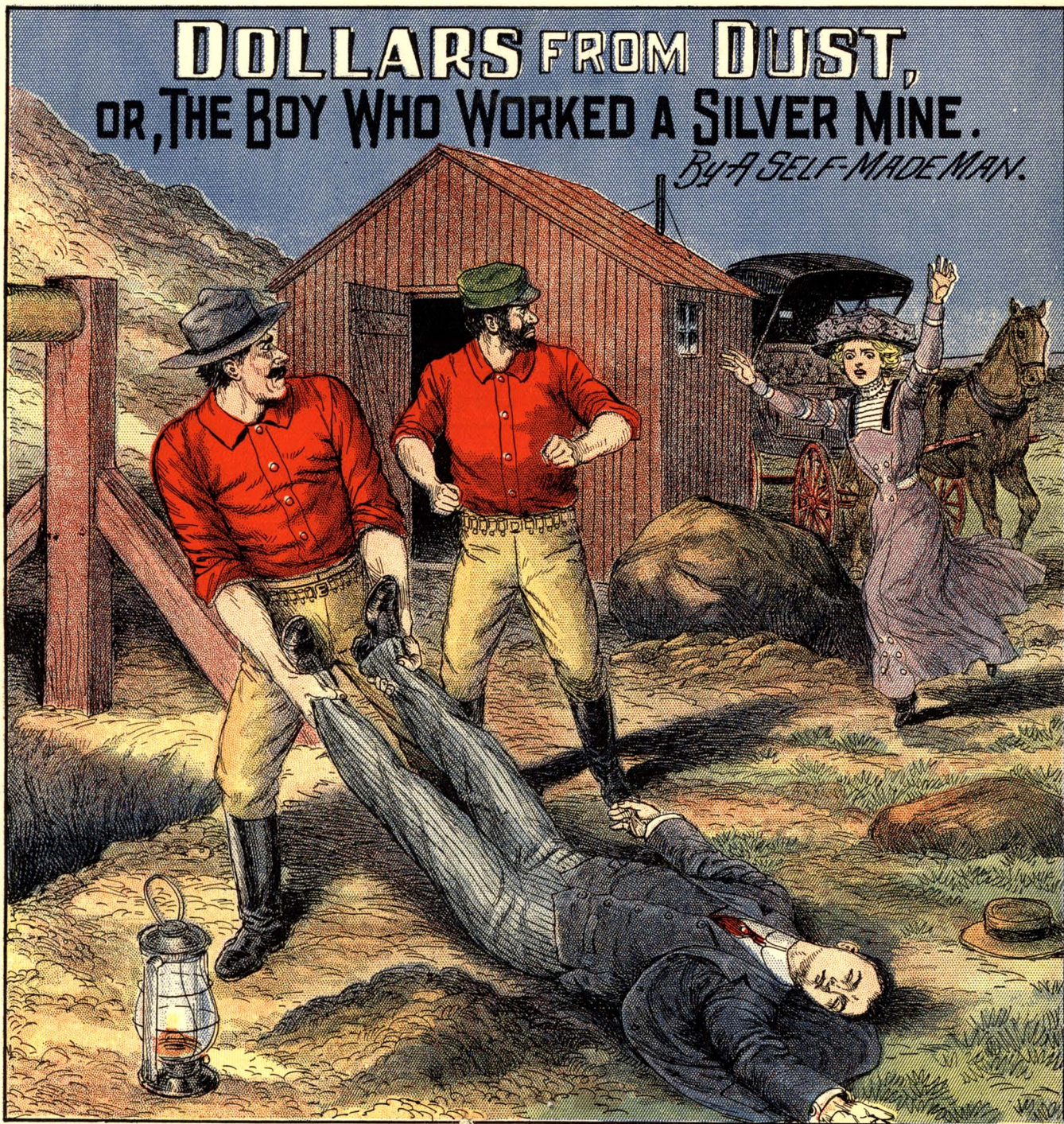
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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

DOLLARS FROM DUST, OR, THE BOY WHO WORKED A SILVER MINE.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



The ruffian was dragging the senseless boy to the mouth of the shaft, intending to drop him into the mine, when there sounded a wild shriek. A girl alighting from a carriage rushed toward them, screaming: "Stop that, you villains!"

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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DOLLARS FROM DUST

OR,

THE BOY WHO WORKED A SILVER MINE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

THE BOY FROM THE EAST.

"How far is it to Redrock?"

The words were addressed to the agent of a small station on the Sante Fe, Prescott & Phoenix Railroad line, and the speaker was a good-looking boy, dressed in city clothes.

He had a suit case in his hand, and he had just alighted from a train which had come from Phoenix.

He was the only passenger who got off at the lonesome station, and the train had gone on as soon as it dropped him.

"About twenty miles as the crow flies, perhaps ten more by trail," replied the agent, a dark-skinned, rough-and-ready looking man, dressed in a cowboy hat, a gray shirt, pants stuck in the tops of his boots and attached to his waist by a belt, eying the boy curiously, "Goin' thar?"

"I am."

"Why didn't you go on to Florence, then?"

"Why should I?"

The man looked the newcomer over again before replying.

"Because that's the place to get off if you're goin' to Redrock."

"It is?" replied the boy in surprise.

"Yep."

"How far is it from here?"

"Eighteen mile."

"I was told to get off at this station."

"Who told you?"

"A man I met in Phoenix."

"Did you tell him you were bound for Redrock?"

"Yes."

"And he told you to get off here?"

"He did."

The agent rolled his quid in his mouth, expectorated, and then grinned.

"He must have been a tenderfoot like yourself."

"You mean a stranger to Arizona?"

"Yep."

"He didn't look like it. Besides, he said he knew the country like a book."

"He said that?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Why didn't you ask the agent when you bought your ticket? He'd have sot you right."

"Because I supposed this station was the nearest stopping place to Redrock."

"Wal, it ain't. You ought to have gone on to Florence. That's a town, and thar's a stage runnin' to the mines. It doesn't connect with the train you come down on, but you could go over in the mornin'."

"Redrock is a mining town, I believe?"

"I reckon it ain't nothin' else, sonny. You're from the East, eh?"

"Yes—from New York."

"'Scuse me, but what might be your business in Redrock?"

"I'm going to look after a mine that was left to me."

"A mine!"

The agent's eyes opened pretty wide, and he let out a whistle.

"So you own a mine?" he continued, looking the boy over for the third time.

"I do. It was willed to me by the owner, who died in New York."

"You don't say. Relative, I s'pose?"

"No. He was a stranger to me up to a week before he died."

"A stranger! And he left his mine to you?"

"Yes. I did him a good turn. He hadn't any one else to leave it to. Not a soul in the world, so he showed his gratitude by deeding the mine over to me."

"You're lucky, if the mine is worth anythin'. What's the name of it?"

"Red Crow."

"Don't know nothin' 'bout it. Never heard tell of it. Sure it ain't a wild cat?"

"No; it's a real mine."

"How d'ye know it is?"

"Because I've got the deed, and it's marked recorded in the county clerk's office at Florence, with the date and stamp."

"Then I reckon thar ain't no doubt about the property, but it may be a dead one, for all that."

"No, it isn't a dead one—it's a rich claim."

"Oh, it is? How d'ye know that?"

"Dan Harker said that he had discovered——"

The boy stopped abruptly, as if conscious he was saying too much.

"Who's Dan Harker?"

"The prospector who gave me the mine just before he died."

"What did he discover—ore?"

"Indications of ore, but he wasn't sure," replied the boy, in a hesitating tone. "He came to New York to try and interest some capitalist to go in with him. Before he met a moneyed man he was hit by a motor car on the street. I tried to save him, but only partly succeeded. Only for me he'd have been killed outright, in all probability. I got him to a hospital, called on him regularly every day, and did what I could for him, but he'd received internal injuries and he couldn't recover."

"And he left you the mine 'cause you was good to him?"

"Yes. He was friendless in New York, and he said my visits were like rays of sunshine to him. At any rate, he was grateful to me for the effort I made to save his life, and he did what he could to show his appreciation."

"So you thought you'd come to Arizona to take a look at your property?"

"Yes. I'm an orphan, and there was nothing to keep me in New York."

"Jest so. You ain't a capitalist, are you?"

"I should say not. I wish I was."

"What d'ye expect to do with your mine?"

"I can't say till I see it."

"Wal, if the owner needed capital to work it, you'll need it, too."

"I suppose so."

"How are you goin' to get it?"

"I couldn't tell you offhand."

"Wal, I wish you luck. It's too bad you got off here.

You'll have to stay over till mornin' and take the first train for Florence. You kin bunk at my house if you don't mind payin' a dollar, and I'll give you some breakfast, as well as supper, but it won't be hotel feed."

The boy looked around the lonesome place rather doubtfully.

There were only a few shacks, that might be called houses, near the station, bordering on a well-defined wagon road that led southward, and seemed to be much used.

Several freight cars were standing on the long siding, which showed that the railroad did some business at the place, though whence the business came from the young stranger from the East could not possibly guess, but he judged that whatever was shipped from the lone station came over the road from a distance.

He had been directed to get off at that station by an acquaintance he had made in Phoenix.

From his talk, the boy judged that he knew all about the country, and he seemed to be perfectly familiar with Redrock.

How was it that Bud Dalton, that was the man's name, had misdirected him?

Had he done it designedly?

If so, what possible object could he have had in doing so?

He had described the station accurately, and he had told the young tenderfoot that he'd have to buy a horse of a certain man he mentioned and follow the trail to the northeast.

As for the town of Florence, he did not even mention it.

"By the way, sonny, what might be your name?" asked the station agent.

"Dick Alvord."

"Mine is Hen Vicary. My house is yonder—the one with the trough in front of it. That's my nevvie, Brad Smith, loungin' in the door. I keep a bar, and he tends it. When the waggins get here from the Tuscarora mine yonder," and the agent waved his arm down the road, "business is rushin'. At other times thar ain't nothin' doin' to speak of, 'cept of night, when the boys 'round here drop in and talk and wet thar whistles. I s'pose you'll stop with me till mornin'. You kin sleep with Brad. He won't object, and I don't see that you kin do any better."

"Do you know a man around here named Sam Hickey?" asked Dick.

"I reckon," replied Vicary, looking at the boy pretty hard. "How came you to know him?"

"Bud Dalton referred me to him for a horse."

"Bud Dalton!" exclaimed the agent. "So you know that chap, do you?"

"Not very well. He's the man I met in Phoenix who told me to get off at this station, buy a horse of Sam Hickey, and take the trail, which Hickey would point out to me, for Redrock," replied Dick.

"So it was Bud Dalton who directed you to do that?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"Wal, I reckon I know somethin' about him, and I don't want to know nothin' more if I can help myself."

"Why so?"

"Look here, sonny, how came you to meet Dalton?"

"I met him at the Phoenix House. He introduced him-

self. I didn't know anybody in the town, and I was glad to have somebody to speak to."

"Did you tell him about the mine, and how you got it?"

"Yes. He said he knew all about the mines at Redrock; that's how I came to tell him. He treated me in a very friendly way, and though I didn't fancy his face much, I thought he must be a pretty good fellow."

"Sonny, I'm afraid you told him too much. It ain't none of my business, of course, but seein' as you're a tenderfoot, and not a bad sort of chap, I think it's my duty to warn you against havin' more to do with Bud Dalton or his pals."

"Why?" exclaimed Dick in a tone of surprise.

"Because he's what we call down here a bad man."

"Do you mean to say that he's not to be trusted?"

"I do. He's suspected to have some connection with the bandit gang that have lately been tearin' things up in this here county."

"Good gracious!"

"He must have had some purpose in tellin' you to get off at this station, and buy a hoss of Sam Hickey. Sam is a pal of his, and don't bear a good reputation. If you go near him I won't guarantee that you'll ever see Redrock."

This was plain English, straight from the shoulder, and fairly made Dick gasp.

CHAPTER II.

BRAD SMITH.

"You're putting the matter pretty strong, Mr. Vicary," replied Dick, after a moment's silence. "I don't see what object Bud Dalton could have in leading me astray."

"Have you got any money about you?"

"Not a great deal."

"Maybe you gave Dalton the idea that you were well fixed."

"I am sure I couldn't have given him that impression because I'm not."

"He must have figured that you're worth plucking, or he wouldn't have taken so much interest in you."

"But I left him in Phoenix, so how could he rob me hereabouts?"

"His pal, Hickey, could do you up when he took you out yonder in the brush to p'int out the trail to Redrock."

"Well, if Florence is the right place for me to have gone to, it certainly looks queer that Dalton should tell me to get off at this place."

"That's just it."

"As the circumstances look suspicious, I'll take your advice and stay away from Hickey."

"You couldn't do better, but you don't want to say nothin' about me warnin' you ag'in them chaps, for if they should hear I've queered their little game, whatever it is, they'll make trouble for me."

"I won't say a word about what you told me, and I thank you for the tip."

"You're welcome. Come over to my shack and I'll introduce you to my neevy. You'll find Brad a clever boy. He can tell you considerable about Hickey. The rascal comes in my place about every night when he ain't away somewheres, so it's likely you'll see him. Then you can

size him up yourself. I'll gamble on it that you won't fall in love with him."

Vicary took Dick over to his house and introduced him to his nephew.

Brad Smith was about Dick's own age, and he was a pretty wide-awake lad.

He was dressed in a free-and-easy way like his uncle, and looked every inch the typical young Westerner he was.

Vicary explained to his nephew Dick's predicament, and said that the young tenderfoot would stop overnight at the house, and then take the morning train for Florence.

"I'll leave him with you, Brad, as I've got some business on hand at the station. Make him feel at home," said the agent, who then went away, after telling Dick he'd see him at supper.

"I'll take your grip inside, Alvord," said Brad, in a friendly way.

"Thanks," replied Dick, taking his seat on a bench outside the door.

"I s'pose you think there ain't much doing 'round these diggings the way things look at present," said Brad, when he returned and sat beside the newcomer; "but it's lively enough sometimes, when the boys get to whooping things up. That happens 'most every Saturday night, when the miners and the busters from Thompson's ranch come over to take the freight in to Florence to make a night of it there. Florence is the county seat, and quite a lively town for its size. There are shows and gambling joints there, so a fellow can have a bang-up time if he's got his wages in his pocket. So you got off here by mistake, eh?"

"No, not exactly. I was told by a person whose acquaintance I made in Phoenix that this was the nearest point to Redrock," replied Dick.

"He must have been off his perch, then. Why, this is only a siding for the Tuscarora mine off yonder. None of the passenger trains stop here unless they're flagged. If you'd asked the ticket agent at Phoenix he'd have told you that Florence is the place where you transfer to the Redrock stage."

"Well, you see, I'm new in these diggings, as you call it, and I took Bud Dalton's word for it, as he looked and acted as if he knew the ropes."

"Who—Bud Dalton?" said Brad, looking hard at Dick.

"Yes, that was his name."

"A square-built, flashy-dressed chap, with a heavy black mustache?"

"You've described him."

"How in thunder did you come to get in with him?"

"I met him at the Phoenix House, and he made himself very friendly."

"And he told you to get off here to go to Redrock?"

"He did. Told me to get a horse from a man named Sam Hickey, and take the trail which Hickey would point out to me."

"Say, did you flash a wad before Dalton?"

"No. I haven't got such a thing."

"Well, there must be some reason for him telling you to get off the train at this point. Did you intend calling on Hickey for a horse to take you to Redrock?"

"I did when I got off the train; but after a talk with your uncle I changed my mind. I'm thinking that it

wouldn't be good for my health to follow Dalton's directions any further."

"Then Hen put you on to the kind of man Bud Dalton is?"

"He gave me to understand that he wasn't a man to be trusted."

"I should say he isn't, or Sam Hickey, either. They're birds of a feather—birds of prey, in my opinion. Bud Dalton knows as well as any man in the county that this isn't the place to get off to go to Redrock unless you're stuck on taking a thirty-mile ride on horseback along the trail through the brush, and I ain't seen nobody that cares to do it when you can go to Florence, which is only twelve miles from the Redrock mines, and take the stage, or a horse if you'd rather travel that way. Dalton saw you were a tenderfoot, sized you up as having money, and sent you to his pal, Hickey, to do up. That seems as plain as daylight to me, knowing the kind of chaps those two are, and I'm thinking I don't know the worst of them, either."

"It strikes me the same way now. Had the scheme succeeded Hickey wouldn't have made a whole lot out of me," replied Dick. "He couldn't get what I haven't got."

"Well, you must have some money about your clothes, even if it ain't such a lot, and he'd have got that, at any rate. It's a good thing for you that you told Hen all the facts."

"Yes, I think so."

"You'll be safe here, and you'll reach Florence in time to connect with the Redrock stage. Then you'll be all right unless the mountain bandits take the notion into their heads to hold up the stage, which they've done several times during the last six months."

"Your uncle told me that Bud Dalton is suspected of having some connection with those robbers."

"A good many people think so, but they haven't any proof of it. It's my opinion that he and Hickey are hand-in-glove with that crowd. I know Hickey doesn't do anything around here to earn his living, yet he always has money. Every little while he disappears, and is gone for a week or more. He never lets on where he's been when he comes back, and nobody can find out why he hangs around this place. They say the sheriff of the county has his eye on him of late, and also on Dalton, when he comes here or goes to Florence; but if he has it hasn't amounted to anything so far."

Brad asked Dick the object of his visit to the mines, and the boy told him what he had already said to the station agent on the subject.

"So you own one of the mines there, eh?" said Brad.

"Yes, but I can't say as yet just what it amounts to."

"I don't know that I ever heard anybody speak of the Red Crow. At any rate, it isn't one of the producers. Mr. Long owns about all the mines that are worth anything at Redrock. He's an eastern capitalist, who got in on the ground floor and has made a good thing of it. They say he's got a pretty daughter living with him at the diggings. You ought to make her acquaintance when you get there. She'll be glad to meet a young chap like you from the East, and her father can probably give you all the information you want to know about your mine."

"He's the man I want to see. You say his name is Long?"

"Yes; George Long."

At that moment a man with a swarthy complexion and dressed something like a Mexican appeared around the corner of the house.

His trousers were loose at the bottoms, slit up and held together with buckskin laces; his jacket was of a fancy design, wide open, displaying a soft, bright colored shirt, and he wore a sombrero on his head.

He looked sharply at Brad Smith and the young Easterner, and then advanced toward them with a friendly grin.

"Wal, Brad," he said, familiarly, "who's the tenderfoot?"

Brad looked up quickly and then nudged Dick.

"Here's Sam Hickey," he whispered.

CHAPTER III.

SAM HICKEY.

Dick Alvord eyed the man to whom he had intended to apply for a horse and directions to locate the trail to Redrock.

The inspection was not particularly reassuring.

He was glad that circumstances had prevented him from calling on Hickey.

"Hello, Hickey," returned Brad, with an assumed friendly air, but making no effort to introduce Dick; "what's stirring?"

"Nothin', unless it is the wind," replied Hickey with a grin. "Introduce me to your friend."

So Brad had to do it.

"From the East?" said Hickey, looking hard at Dick.

"Yes," replied the boy.

"Friends in these diggin's?"

"No."

"Come on business, eh?"

"Yes."

"Bound for the Tuscarora?"

"No, I'm going on to——"

Brad hit him a crack in the side with his elbow and choked off what he was going to say.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, old man, for hitting you," cried Brad effusively, as he made a bluff of leaning over to reach for a bit of wood on the seat. "Mind what you say," he added in a whisper.

"Whar did yer say yer were goin'?" asked Hickey, when Dick didn't continue his sentence.

"Down the railroad."

"As far as Florence, eh?"

"Yes, or further."

"How kin yer to drop off here?"

"To call on my friend, Brad Smith."

"That's right," put in Brad. "Dick and me are old friends."

Hickey sat down beside Smith and proceeded to roll a cigarette, Mexican fashion, and then light it in a leisurely way.

"Ever been in Arizona before?" asked Hickey, carelessly.

"Never," replied Dick.

"Brad has been here a good while. Whar did yer meet him?"

"St. Louis," said Brad, quickly. "We went to school together."

A dark gleam came into Hickey's eyes, and for a moment he was silent, blowing rings of tobacco smoke from his lips and apparently watching them float away.

"Say, you ain't seen my new mare, have yer, Brad?" he said.

"No. Got a new one, have you?"

"I reckon. Come and see it. Mebbe you'd like to buy it, or p'haps yer friend would?"

"He's got no use for a horse."

"I'll sell it dirt cheap," continued Hickey, not noticing his reply.

"Where did you get it?"

"In Florence this mornin'. Rode over here on her. She's a spanker."

"One horse is enough for me," replied Brad.

"Come and look at her, anyway."

"I will sometime."

At that juncture an old woman came to the door of the public room and looked out.

"I want you a moment, Brad," she said.

"What do you want?" asked Smith, impatiently.

"I've got a job for you."

"Oh, let the job wait. I'm engaged."

"It won't wait. You've got to come, or there won't be no supper to-night."

Brad got up reluctantly, nudging Dick.

Dick rose and started to follow him.

Hickey reached out and grabbed him by the arm.

"Sit down. I want to talk to you," he said.

Dick, much against his will, sat down.

"Isn't it a fact, young feller, that you're bound for Red-rock mining camp?" said Hickey.

"Well, s'pose I am?" blurted out Dick.

"Nothin'. I heard you was, that's all."

"How did you hear? Did——"

Dick stopped suddenly.

He was about to ask if the station agent had told him, but remembering that Hen Vicary was not likely to impart any information to a man of Hickey's stamp he caught himself in time.

"How did I hear?" replied Hickey, rolling another cigarette and calmly lighting it. "I guessed it the moment I looked at yer."

"Well, what about it?"

"What yer goin' to do thar?"

"I don't know exactly what I'm going to do."

"I s'pose yer goin' to Florence by the mornin' train?"

"I expect to."

"And take the coach to the camp?"

"When I go there I suppose I'll have to take that conveyance."

"Why don't yer buy my hoss and ride over to Redrock by the trail? You'll need a hoss at the mines."

"If I do I can buy one there, I guess."

"Yer'll pay twice as much as I ask for my mare. After yer use her as much as yer want to yer kin sell her at a good profit."

"Why are you selling the animal so cheap?"

"'Cause I got her for nothin'. Won her at a game of freeze out."

"I don't want a horse just now, anyway."

"You could ride over to the mines."

"I'd rather go by train and stage. It's shorter and quicker."

"You'd save money all 'round, and I reckon yer ain't in no rush to get thar."

"Much obliged for your offer, but we can't do any business."

"Goin' to stay with Brad to-night, I s'pose?"

"Yes."

"Wal, so long. Mebbe I'll see yer in the mornin'."

Hickey got up and strolled away just as Brad returned.

"He's gone, eh?" he said. "Did he try to pump you?"

"Not much; but he guessed I was headed for Redrock."

"How could he guess that? Did you admit it?"

"Couldn't help it very well. He wanted me to buy his mare, the one he offered you. Said he won it at a card game, and would let it go cheap."

"If you bought his horse you'd have to ride it to the camp over the trail, the very thing you oughtn't to do under the circumstances. It would take you all day, anyway, to do the twenty-eight miles, even if you didn't miss your way, which you might, as you're a stranger in this section. By rail and stage you'll get to Redrock in a couple of hours. That's the only way for you to go."

"Of course. I turned his offer down."

"What else did he say to you?"

"Asked me if I was goin' to stay with you to-night, and when I said 'yes' he got up and walked away, saying he might see me in the morning."

"He's a bad egg," replied Brad. "I wish he'd move away from this neighborhood. You never can tell what a fellow of his stamp will do."

Their conversation then turned on other things.

Fred asked Dick many questions about New York, and Alvord gave him a general description of the city, and how he had got along there since the death of his mother a year since, which left him an orphan without any near relatives.

By and by the woman came to the door and told Brad to call his uncle to supper.

Brad and Dick walked over to the station together, and Hen Vicary, after locking up, accompanied them back, and the three sat down to a good, palatable meal, which Dick relished as much as a better one at a hotel.

After dark the men who lived in the small hamlet began to drop in at Vicary's public room to spend the evening.

They gathered about a large, round table, with Vicary as one of the bunch, and opened up a game of poker for small stakes.

They talked, laughed, drank and smoked, while Brad looked after the bar end, and conversed with Dick.

Hickey didn't put in an appearance, and at eleven o'clock Vicary shut up shop, and his friends and patrons departed.

Dick accompanied Brad to a room on the second floor, where there was a bed large enough to accommodate two.

The boys turned in and were soon asleep.

Dick was usually a sound sleeper, but something aroused him this night.

He looked around the room, and his gaze was arrested at the window.

The lower sash was up and a man was in the act of getting in.

There was enough light for the boy to recognize the intruder.

It was Sam Hickey.

CHAPTER IV.

CHECKMATING A RUFFIAN.

Dick was greatly startled, not only by this midnight invasion, but by the fact that the intruder was Sam Hickey, which assured him that he was the object of the man's attention.

He punched Brad in the side in so vigorous a way that Smith woke up.

By that time Hickey was in the room, and was making for the chair on which stood Dick's suit case, half open.

The young tenderfoot was not wanting in pluck.

After punching his companion into wakefulness, he sprang out of bed and made a dash at Hickey.

"Hold on there, what are you doing in this room?" he cried, grabbing the fellow by the arm.

Hickey, who had supposed the occupants of the room were asleep, for he had taken a look at them before he stepped in at the window, turned with a start and a deep imprecation.

Swinging his fist at Dick, he knocked the boy down, grabbed the suit case and made for the window.

Brad, however, was quicker than he.

The station agent's nephew sprang over the foot of the bed and collared the intruder.

"Drop that case, Sam Hickey. What in thunder are you doing in here at this hour of the night? Trying to hook my friend's case? This is bad business for you to be engaged in. You know your reputation ain't none of the best, and this piece of work won't help it any."

Hickey was somewhat staggered when Brad Smith grabbed him, and it was a moment or two before he made a move.

He didn't drop the suit case, but partially shaking Brad off, he drew his revolver and shoved it in the boy's face.

"Git back to bed," he said, fiercely, "and if yer utter a yawp I'll send yer to kingdom come."

Brad was no coward, but a cocked revolver pointed within an inch of his nose, by a man he believed capable of shooting on the slightest provocation, was not to be disregarded.

Dick had got up, and seeing his new acquaintance in danger, and his suit case, which contained what little money he had, the deed and other documents connected with the Red Crow mine, and all his duds, in the hands of a night thief, he jumped for Hickey and grabbed the revolver.

As the rascal's finger was on the trigger, Dick's sudden action caused it to go off with a report that awoke Hen Vicary, who slept in the next room, as well as the house-keeper, who roosted in the garret.

Hickey uttered an imprecation and turned on Dick.

He tossed the suit case out on the roof of the one-story kitchen and then grappled with the boy.

As he was much stronger than Dick, it would have gone

hard with the young Easterner had not Brad smashed Hickey in the jaw with considerable force.

At that moment Vicary came rushing into the room.

"What's the trouble here?" he asked, noting the struggle that was going on between the two boys and a third person he did not at once recognize.

"Grab him, Hen. It's Sam Hickey," cried his nephew.

"Sam Hickey!" exclaimed the station agent in some surprise.

Then he jumped in and seized the rascal by the arm that held the revolver.

That enabled Dick to get the weapon away from the rascal.

Hickey saw that the game was up, so he quit making any further effort to escape.

"What does this mean, Hickey?" demanded Vicary, sternly. "What brought you here to-night?"

"He came here to hook Alvord's suit case. He threw it out on the roof of the kitchen," said Fred.

"Have you taken to thievin', Hickey, or is that your reg'lar trade?" asked the station agent.

"You'd better let me go, Hen Vicary, and say nothin' about this, or you'll regret it," replied Hickey, darkly.

"I'll take my chances on that, Hickey," replied Vicary. "You've shown yourself in your true colors at last, and the sheriff will have to attend to your case. Get a rope, Brad."

"You intend to turn me over to the sheriff, then?" hissed the rascal.

"I reckon that's just what I'm goin' to do. When a man breaks into my house I treat him as a thief. You've broke in so——"

Hickey, by a sudden and violent effort, shook the station agent off and leaped out of the window.

Dick, fearing for his property outside, raised the revolver and fired.

Hickey fell on the kitchen roof and rolled off.

Vicary jumped out of the window, and going to the edge of the roof, looked down.

A sarcastic laugh floated toward him from the corner of the building.

"You'll hear from me, Hen Vicary, afore long, and when yer do look out."

After flinging that threat at the station agent, Sam Hickey made off in the darkness.

"I reckon I'll have to carry a gun handy after this," muttered Vicary, picking up Dick's suit case and handing it to its owner.

Then he re-entered the room, shut down the window and turning to the boys, told them to turn in, as they were not likely to be disturbed again that night.

"This night's work settles Hickey around here," said Brad. "He won't dare show his nose in the place, for if he should he knows what he may expect to happen."

"It's lucky for me that I didn't call on him as I intended when I got off the train," said Dick. "He is evidently a hard rascal, and might have shot me if I had gone with him on the Redrock trail. At any rate, he would have robbed me, and set me adrift. I'm thinking Bud Dalton is a bird of the same feather."

"That's what I told you, ain't it?" said Vicary, moving toward the door.

In another moment the two boys were alone again.

"How came you to wake up, Alvord, in time to spot that rascal?" asked Brad.

"Blessed if I know. That fellow must have made a noise in raising the window," replied Dick. "If he'd have got away with my suit case, I'd have been strapped, and I'd have been out of the mine as well, for all the documents relating to it are in the case."

"Do you know that I think Bud Dalton must have sent word to Hickey about you," said Brad. "When I come to think about the way he acted this afternoon after I introduced you to him, and the fact that he seemed to know you were bound to Redrock, I'm almost sure that he had advance information."

"Dalton may have sent him full particulars by somebody who came here from Phoenix by the morning train," said Dick.

"No, the morning train didn't stop here."

"Then how could he have got the information?"

"You heard him say that he rode over from Florence on his new mare?"

"Yes."

"If Dalton knew he was there he could have sent him a letter by the morning train, which carries the mail, or he might have sent him a telegram couched in language unintelligible to the operators, but perfectly plain to Hickey. Dalton would hardly take all that trouble unless he had reason to believe there was something in it. Well, maybe it wasn't your money but the papers proving your title to the mine that Dalton was after. The new deed isn't recorded yet, and if destroyed, you might not be able to prove your right to the mine. Dalton may have figured out some plan of getting possession of it himself in case he got the papers away from you, and intended to get Hickey to clean you out. To prevent you from reaching Florence and putting your papers on file with the county clerk, as well as to put you in Hickey's clutches, he told you to get off the train at this place."

"I wouldn't be surprised but you are right," answered Dick. "I told Dalton too much about my business, which only shows what a blunderfoot I am."

"Well, it don't make any difference now. You've euclred Hickey, and you're on to Dalton, so if their object was to do you out of the mine you can easily balk the game by taking your documents to the clerk's office as soon as you reach Florence and filing them. That will secure you possession of the property in spite of anything they could do afterward. You'll miss the stage, however, but I dare say you'll find some teamster going out to the camp, and can arrange with him to take you. If you're not in a big hurry you could stay over till the following morning in town. You'll find plenty of amusement there to fill in the time," said Brad.

The boys talked awhile longer and then turned over and went to sleep.

The train was due at a little after nine, and when it came along Vicary flagged it for Dick.

Alvord bade his new friends good-by, said he hoped to see them again before long, and stepped aboard one of the cars.

Forty minutes later the train stopped at Florence, which appeared to be a bustling town, and Dick got off.

The Redrock stage was standing in front of the station, its driver on the lookout for the mail and any passenger bound for the mining camp.

It made one round trip daily, though it could have made two had there been anything in it for the owner, for it was not much over seven miles to the camp.

"Why, I could walk that distance easily," thought Dick, "if there was any need of my doing so. Maybe I can hire a horse and ride out there after dinner. I've a great mind to do that if there is any way by which I can send the animal back."

Dick inquired his way to the county clerk's office, and reaching it, soon put his papers on file, and thus relieved his mind on the subject of the mine.

Then he went to the Florence Hotel and registered.

Finding that dinner would be ready at half-past twelve, he went out to look at the town, and, incidentally, to make inquiries as to whether he could get a conveyance to the mines that afternoon.

CHAPTER V.

HELD UP IN DEAD MAN'S PASS.

Dick found that Florence was a lively place, and he found much to interest him in the course of his walk.

When he got back to the hotel he learned from the clerk that there was a team in the yard which was going to start in the direction of Redrock after the driver had had his dinner.

"He goes within a mile of the camp," said the clerk, "and if you don't mind walking that distance I'll introduce you to him and you can talk with him about taking you. I don't believe he'll charge you anything, for he'll probably be glad to have your company."

Dick said he'd like to see the man, so the clerk sent one of the hotel help to find him, and it wasn't long before he turned up at the desk.

"So you want to ride out to Redrock camp, eh?" said the driver to Dick after the clerk had introduced them.

"Yes. I'd like to get there as soon as I can," replied the boy.

"I can take you as far as the entrance to Dead Man's Pass. That's a little over a mile from the camp. You couldn't miss your way, for the road through the pass will take you straight there. If you've got any baggage you can arrange to have it brought over by the stage to-morrow morning," said the man.

"I've got only a suit case, and I haven't any objection lugging that a mile," answered Dick. "How much will you charge me?"

"Not a red. I'll be glad to have you along. It makes time pass quicker when you've someone to talk to."

Dick decided to go with him and told him so.

"All right. There's the dinner bell. We'll start as soon as we've filled up. You can eat with me if you don't mind. Come on."

Dick followed the driver into the dining-room and they sat down together.

Both did ample justice to the bill of fare, which was a good one, and then the driver hitched up his team and drove around in front, where Dick got up beside him.

The man lighted his pipe and then touched up his pair of horses.

They rattled out of town at a lively gait, and took a well-marked road for the foothills of the San Topaz mountains, on the opposite slope of which stood the Redrock mining camp.

The driver, whose name was Mike O'Leary, was curious to learn what had brought the young Easterner to Arizona, and Dick told him that he had come to take possession of a silver mine which had been left to him by its late owner, Dan Harker, a prospector and miner.

"You're a lucky young chap if the mine amounts to anything," replied O'Leary. "What name does it go by?"

"Red Crow."

"That must be one of them claims that lie all around the Long producers. You see, when ore is discovered in a spot, no matter where, it brings a great rush of prospectors and speculators to the vicinity, and claims are staked out and title taken to 'em on the chance that they'll amount to something. The nearer these claims are to the properties that have developed real ore, the more chance there is that somethin' in the same line may be found in them. It's all a lottery though, for the prospectors generally take up a claim first and prospect it afterward. If they didn't do that, somebody else would claim it and they'd lose the chance of getting hold of what might prove to be a good thing."

"I suppose you couldn't tell me how close the Red Crow is to one of the mines that is turning out paying ore?" said Dick.

"No. There are so many of them unproductive properties lying all around the edge of the known silver belt, that I couldn't p'int out the location of yours."

"If it should happen to be close to one of the mines turning out ore I suppose I may figure that it might be a possible producer itself?"

"It doesn't follow, though, on general principles the closer it is to the silver belt the more likely it is that an off-shoot from the main silver vein might run into it. Still, I've known many cases where there has been a complete break in a ledge of ore running into an adjacent claim, and that same ledge turned up again as rich as ever on a claim several hundred yards away that was deemed worthless until the discovery was made by accident. As I said, it's a lottery, and there's more blanks than prizes by a long chalk."

Dick learned a lot about mines and mining operations in the San Topaz district from O'Leary before they reached Dead Man's Pass, where they had to separate.

"Follow the road straight ahead," said the driver, pointing through the pass with his whip, after handing Dick his suit case. "It's only a little over a mile to the camp. The mines themselves are all to the north and west of the town. They call it a town, but it's only a collection of buildings on both sides of a single street. The hotel is a two-story house about half way up the street. It's called the Redrock House. Mr. Long and his daughter live there. He had an addition built expressly for his own and his gal's use. He furnished it up himself and fetched a piano from Phoenix for the young lady to amuse herself. Her name is Susanne, and she's a corkin' fine lookin' gal. I reckon you'll lose your heart to her when you see her. If your

mine turns up trumps you might make up to her and marry her. She's a good catch, for they say her father is worth more'n a million or two, and I reckon she'll get it all when he turns up his toes. Well, good-by. Come out and see me some time. This here road will take you right to Mason's ranch, where you'll find me 'most any time, though I do go off sometimes with this team."

Dick promised to call on him at the ranch when he found the chance, and then O'Leary whipped up his horses and drove off, leaving the boy standing at the entrance to the pass.

"Well, here goes for Redrock," said Dick to himself, as he started off up the narrow break in the San Topaz range.

As he proceeded, the road wound around a curve and he lost sight of the level country in his rear.

He soon found himself in the midst of the wildest and most romantic scenery he had ever been brought face to face with.

The well-defined road was the only thing that reminded him of civilization.

It went up and up through the range, curving around precipitous spots where the mountain side had been cut away to afford room for a team to pass, and bridged here and there where its course was interrupted by natural breaks and washouts.

Far above him loomed the mountain crags and peaks, clothed in a dense brush, through which trees of a hard and dry appearance shot up like lone sentinels on outpost duty.

It was a lonesome and rather toilsome walk, and he was hot and tired before he had got half way through the rugged pass.

Although Dick had been sensible of the dry heat of Arizona ever since he struck the State, he was willing to swear that this walk was through the hottest section he had struck yet, though the afternoon sun had declined so far that the road was always in the shade.

There wasn't a breath of air to cool his fevered brow, and he looked in vain for some stream or even rill in which to lave his face and cool his parched tongue.

Finally he sat down on a rock behind some scrub bushes and mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"O'Leary said this pass was about half a mile through," he muttered; "but it seems to me the biggest half mile I ever tried to walk. I ought to be somewhere near the end of it, but I don't see any indication of the fact. Lord, I almost wish I'd hired a horse. This suit case feels as if it was loaded with silver ore, though it was light enough when I parted from O'Leary. Well, what's the use of kicking? I won't reach Redrock any quicker by making a fuss over this tramp."

At that moment Dick saw a couple of rough-looking, bearded men come running down the road.

When they almost reached the spot where the boy sat they jumped behind a big boulder, as if hiding from some one.

"I wonder who they are, and what they are up to?" thought Dick. "Their actions are decidedly suspicious."

Just then he heard the slow gallop of a horse in the near distance coming from the same direction as the men had appeared.

Presently around the turn ahead came a girl on horse-back.

She rode with a grace and confidence that attracted Dick's admiration, and as she drew nearer he saw that she was remarkably pretty.

"I'll bet that is Susanne Long, daughter of the Red-rock silver king," said the boy to himself. "O'Leary said she was a corking fine girl, and Brad Smith told me she was a spanker and the only girl in Redrock who didn't have to earn her living."

As the horse and girl came abreast of the boulder the two bearded men sprang out from their place of concealment and blocked the way.

Both seized the animal by the bridle and brought her to a stop.

"What do you mean by stopping me in this way?" demanded the girl, indignantly.

"We mean that you're our pris'ner, miss," replied one of the pair.

"Your prisoner!" gasped the young lady.

"That's what," laughed the man. "You're old man Long's darter, and I reckon he'll pay a good round sum to get yer back."

"Get me back!" she cried, with flushed face. "You wouldn't dare detain me."

"Wal, now, I reckon that's jest what we're goin' to do," chuckled the rascal. "We've been on the lookout for yer these two weeks, and we've got yer at last."

"I order you to release my horse," she cried, imperiously.

"Couldn't think of it, miss. You're worth ten thousand dollars at least to us, and we need the money."

"Take your hands off the bridle, both of you, or I'll shoot," cried the plucky girl, suddenly drawing a revolver from a holster in front of her and covering each man in turn.

The two rascals were taken aback, but only for a moment.

They were evidently used to taking chances with firearms.

One of them dropped the bridle, dodged down, and coming up suddenly beside the girl, grabbed the hand that held the revolver.

The gun went off, the report echoing through the pass.

The fellow then proceeded to pull the young lady off the mare.

She uttered a thrilling scream and fought desperately with him.

Dick, after witnessing the first part of the encounter, and realizing what the object of the men was, pulled his suit case toward him, unstrapped and unlocked it, and fumbling in one corner, pulled out his revolver.

He got it in his hand just as the rascal who had done all the talking succeeded in pulling the girl to the ground.

"Let the hoss go, Mullen," said the man who was holding Miss Long in his arms. "The shot and the gal's scream may bring somebody this way. Chase it and lend me a hand to quiet her."

The other man released the animal and gave her a slap on her flanks which caused her to spring ahead and dash down the road.

As the rascal stepped up to his pal, Dick came out into the road with a resolute look on his face.

"Release that young lady," he cried authoritatively, drawing a bead on the ruffian who held Miss Long.

The two rascals started back in consternation and glared at the brave boy.

CHAPTER VI.

SUSANNE LONG.

"Save me! Save me!" cried the mining king's daughter.

"That's what I intend to do," replied Dick. "Drop that young lady, you rascal, and throw up your hands!"

"Who in thunder are you?" cried the ruffian who held Miss Long.

"That needn't concern you," replied Dick. "Do as I tell you."

"Shoot him, Mullen," hissed the fellow, yanking the girl around so as to cover his body and reaching for his gun.

Mullen jumped behind his companion and Miss Long, and yanking out his revolver, fired at Dick.

The ball tore a piece of cloth out of the boy's jacket at the shoulder, but did not injure him.

As the smoke cleared away he saw the other rascal's revolver coming into action, and quick as a wink he fired at his arm.

The ball struck the man's wrist, breaking it, and he dropped his gun with a cry of pain and rage.

Mullen shoved his revolver around beside the girl's waist, but Dick saw it and jumped just as he pulled the trigger.

The ball went wild, and Dick, springing forward, got a line on the shooter and fired, the bullet smashing his arm at the shoulder.

Mullen shrieked with agony and rolled on the ground.

"Now, let the young lady go," said Dick, shoving his revolver within a few inches of the face of the other ruffian.

Disarmed and wounded, the fellow sullenly obeyed, and Dick caught the fainting girl on his left arm.

At that moment, with a rattle of wheels, the stage from Redrock, en route for Florence, came dashing down the road, with half a dozen men seated on the roof with revolvers in their hands, ready for business.

They had heard the shots, and suspecting a hold-up in the pass by the mountain bandits, had urged the driver of the stage to make speed to the scene of the trouble.

On the approach of the stage the rascal who had released Miss Long turned to make a dash down the road.

"Stop!" shouted Fred, covering him with his revolver again.

The fellow saw he hadn't the ghost of a chance to get away and did not make the attempt.

"Now throw up your hands," ordered the boy.

The rascal obeyed.

Then the coach came up and its passengers piled down and gathered around the combatants.

"Miss Long!" cried the first one in surprise, pulling off his hat on recognizing the mining king's daughter. "What's happened, young man? This looks like a hold-up."

"That's what it is," replied Dick. "These two scoundrels held this young lady up as she came riding down the road there. While one held the bridle the other pulled

her off her horse. Then I stepped in, and we had a bit of shooting. They got the worst of it, though they used the young lady as a breastwork."

"Well, stranger, you seem to be a corker. Who might you be, and where bound?"

"My name is Dick Alvord. I'm a tenderfoot just from New York, and I'm bound for Redrock on foot."

"A tenderfoot, eh? Well, this doesn't look like it. You've got oceans of nerve to face two mountain bandits, who are big and had enough to chaw you up in no time. Shake, young fellow. If this doesn't give you a reputation and the best introduction you could ask for to the boys at the camp, not to speak of old man Long himself, nothin' will."

The speaker held out his hand and Dick took it as the girl raised her head and looked around on the newcomers, every one of whom she knew by sight as employees of her father.

Two of the men from the camp had grabbed hold of the least wounded bandit, while a third was bending over the writhing Mullen.

Miss Long released herself from Dick's arm.

"Boys," she said, "I was held up at this spot by those two men who, but for this brave young stranger, would have carried me away with them as a prisoner, and held me till my father paid them a large sum of money. Take charge of those rascals, and don't let them get away from you."

"No fear of that, Miss Long," said the speaker of the group, respectfully. "Your rescuer has done one of 'em up and left his mark on the other."

"You are a brave boy," said the girl, turning to Dick and holding out her hand to him, "and I am very grateful to you for saving me from those men at the risk of your life. You may be sure I shall not forget the service you have rendered me, nor will my father when he learns what you have done for me."

"That's all right, Miss Long—I believe that's your name."

"Yes, Susanne Long. And what is your name? I am anxious to know to whom I am so greatly indebted."

"Dick Alvord."

"You are a stranger in this neighborhood?"

"I am."

"Are you going to Redrock?"

"Yes."

"Then you may escort me there, if you will. My mare has been sent down the road by those men, and I must walk back. The distance is not far, however. Not much over half a mile."

"I shall be glad to accompany you, Miss Long," said Dick.

The miners had by this time put the two wounded bandits into the stage to take them on to Florence.

"We'll see that they're jailed, Miss Long," said the miner who had spoken to Dick; "but in order to have 'em punished you and this young man will have to appear against 'em in court. I'll state the facts to the police, and say that you'll come to Florence to-morrow or next day to press the charge of attempted abduction."

"Very well. My father will undoubtedly see that these men are punished for their attack on me," replied Su-

sanne. "Look out for my horse, please, and take charge of it."

Two of the miners got into the stage with the prisoners, and the others returned to their seats on the roof.

"Three cheers for the young tenderfoot," cried the miner spokesman.

They were given with a will, and then the stage continued on its way toward Florence, leaving Dick and the girl standing in the road.

"What a plucky fellow you are to attack those two men single handed," said Susanne, regarding Dick with undisguised admiration, as they started on their way.

"I should have considered myself a coward had I remained in the background and allowed those rascals to carry you off. It's the duty of every man to stand by a woman in distress, even if the odds are against him."

"You took your life in your hands by interfering. How can I ever thank you enough?"

"I hope you won't worry yourself about the matter. I consider it a privilege to have had the opportunity to serve you."

"You are certainly very gallant to say so," she replied with a smile. "May I ask if you are from the East?"

"I came direct here from New York."

"Indeed. And have you always lived in New York?"

"Always," answered Dick.

"Well, for a city boy I must say you are quite a wonder. As soon as the boys at our camp learn how you rescued me from those two bandits, after standing their fire at short range, they won't be able to do enough for you. I hope you won't think me too inquisitive if I ask the object of your visit to Redrock. Was it to see my father on business?"

"I intended to call on your father for some information, but that is not the object that brought me here. I have come to find out what I can about a silver mine called the Red Crow, which belongs to me."

"The Red Crow. That's a claim which lies to the north of the Susanne, one of my father's best producers, which he named after me. Why, I understood it belonged to a prospector named Dan Harker. At any rate, he offered to sell an interest in it to my father a short time ago, on condition that my father would work it under his management. As it is some distance outside the recognized silver belt, my father refused to entertain his proposition, though Harker declared that he had found indications of the presence of rich ore. As he refused to give out any information until papers were drawn up and signed, my father wouldn't do business with him. A few days afterward he left the camp, and we haven't seen him since."

"And you'll never see him again," said Dick, solemnly.

"No?"

"No. He is dead."

"Dead. Is it possible. You knew him, then? Perhaps you are a relative of his and you have come here to claim his property?"

"I am not a relative of his. I only knew him one week. Just before he died he willed me his mine, and I have come to look after it."

Dick then went on to tell Susanne all the particulars of his meeting with Dan Harker, and their subsequent brief acquaintance in the New York hospital.

"I see what you did for me isn't the first brave act you've done, for you risked your life to save Harker from being run over, and though you did not wholly succeed, you might have lost your own life in his behalf just the same," said the girl, her admiration for her rescuer increased a hundred fold by his story.

"Well, he showed his gratitude as well as he could," replied Dick. "If there is anything in the facts he gave me, I think your father made a mistake in not taking up with his proposition."

"Maybe he did, but my father is pretty shrewd in his mining transactions. However, on one thing you may depend: he will do all he can to help you develop your mine if there is the least indication of paying ore on the property. He will do this out of gratitude to you for what you have this afternoon done for me."

"I shall be glad to have his advice and assistance, for I know nothing whatever about mining. It would be a great thing for me if the Red Crow turned out a winner, for it is the only thing I possess in the world. If it fails to pay me, why," with a shrug of his shoulders, "I must turn in and hustle at something else."

"Whether the Red Crow turns out to be worth working or not, both I and my father will see that you are handsomely provided for," said Susanne, earnestly.

"If you mean that your father would pay me for saving you from the bandits, I will say right here that I will accept nothing that I do not earn, Miss Long," replied the boy, resolutely. "It was my duty to aid you and I did it. I place no money value on such a service. I would do it again if circumstances demanded it, but I won't accept pay for it."

There was a ring in the boy's voice that deeply impressed the girl, and if she admired the young stranger before, her respect and regard for him was largely increased by his manly words and attitude.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK ARRIVES AT REDROCK.

At that moment they reached the eastern end of the pass, and the country beyond opened to view.

The sun was setting behind the San Topaz range, and the long shadow of the mountain peaks extended across the landscape.

"There is the camp," said Susanne, pointing to the left, and Dick caught his first view of a real mining diggings.

Redrock lay against the foot of the range—a collection of houses and shacks lining both sides of a single wide street, as Mike O'Leary had described it.

Beyond it to the northward were the houses and appliances connected with the different mines.

A train of ore teams, en route for Florence, was climbing the road to the pass, accompanied by a guard of men with rifles, to protect it from attack on the part of the mountain bandits.

The scene was certainly a novel one to the young Easterner, and he took it in eagerly, as a thirsty man does a draught of cool water.

"I never saw a mining camp before," he said to the girl. "It looks wild and woolly to me, just as the pass did when I got well into it."

"Yes, it is rough, and lacks the luxuries of advanced civilization, but you'll find human nature there just the same as elsewhere, only a little more pronounced."

"I shouldn't think you'd care to live out here in the wilds, where you can't enjoy yourself as you could in a big town or city. Even Florence, what little I saw of it, looks like a big place compared with Redrock."

"I am satisfied to live here as long as my father remains on the ground. He has only me, and I—I have only him," she said, with a touch of sadness in her voice. "My mother died a year and a half ago, and her death was a hard blow to father. I was at school in Galveston at the time, and, of course, I was sent for. After mother was buried, father would not let me go back to school, nor did I care to go. I felt that my place was with him, to try and cheer him and do all I could for him. He says I'm the image of mother when she was my age, and he clings more to me for that reason. And so Redrock has become my home, and I want no other as long as my father finds it necessary to stay here."

"Your mother must have been very pretty if she looked like you," said Dick.

A slight blush reddened the nut-brown cheeks of the mining king's daughter, and she made no reply.

Perhaps her heart beat a little quicker at this compliment coming from the good-looking and manly young stranger to whom she owed her life.

"I hope we shall be good friends while I remain at Redrock," he continued.

"Can we be otherwise?" she asked, flashing a look at him that quite took away his breath.

"I should hope not. And I also hope that my stay will not be brief—that my mine may pan out, and give me plenty to do."

"I hope so, too. I feel as if we shall get along very nicely together, for apart from what you have done for me I like you. You are different from the men I have had around me since I came here. You possess a certain air of refinement which is lacking in those who have passed a large part of their lives in this and other out-of-the-way spots, where there are few women to tone them down. They're all very nice to me, it is true, and, I dare say, there is hardly a man among them all but would risk his life for me as you did this afternoon if the occasion called for it; but they are rough and ready, and amuse themselves in ways that I do not approve of—and, because you are different, I am glad you have come, and I hope—you will stay."

"I will certainly remain here if there is anything in it for me," replied Dick. "And the opportunity of enjoying your society will also go a long way toward making me contented with my new situation."

The earnestness of his tone brought another blush to the girl's cheeks, for, to say the truth, she was greatly interested in this young stranger from the East.

As the ore wagon train passed them the men all lifted their hats respectfully to Susanne, and she returned the salutations with smiles and waving of her arm.

In less than ten minutes more Dick and the girl were walking up the street.

She was the recipient of more bows and hat tips, and Dick came in for a large share of curiosity.

Finally they reached the hotel.

"I'll see you at supper," Susanne said to Dick. "Ask one of the waiter girls to show you to our table. My father and I usually reach the dining-room at quarter-past six."

Thus speaking, she bowed sweetly and entered the house by a side door, while the boy went in at the main entrance.

Walking up to the desk, Dick saw a man in his shirt sleeves seated behind the counter smoking, and reading the Florence Daily Argus.

"I should like to have a room, sir," said the young Easterner.

The man, who was the proprietor of the house, looked around, and noting that Dick was a stranger in the camp, he got up and pointed to the register, handing the boy a pen.

Dick put down "Richard Alvord, New York."

"From the East, I see?" said the proprietor, whose name was Jenkins.

"Yes. What do you charge here?"

"By the day or week?"

"By the week."

The proprietor mentioned a moderate price.

"Want your pay in advance?"

"Any baggage?"

"Only a suit case."

"Know anybody in the camp?"

"Yes; Miss Susanne Long."

"You can pay at the end of the week," said the proprietor, putting down room number 21.

Then he rang a bell, and presently a man who acted as porter and general factotum about the house appeared.

"Show this boy to room 21."

"Follow me," said the porter, grabbing up Dick's suit case and starting up a staircase at the other side of the room.

Dick followed him and was soon in his room.

"Supper, six to seven; breakfast, six to eight; and dinner, twelve to one," said the porter, who then departed.

Dick looked at his watch and saw that it was half-past five.

He washed up, brushed his hair carefully, put on a clean collar and scarf, and then went downstairs.

The room below was gradually filling up with men who either lived at the hotel or took their meals there and slept elsewhere.

There were two large, round tables—one littered with newspapers and magazines, the other supplied with writing material.

Most of the chairs were occupied by men talking or reading, while there were twice as many standing around.

Dick, being a stranger, attracted considerable attention.

He walked to the doorway and looked out.

There were nearly a dozen chairs outside on the veranda, and these were mostly filled by men waiting for the supper gong to sound.

Dick took possession of a vacant one and amused himself looking up and down the long street, with its stores, pedestrians and passing vehicles and burros.

At length a big gong sounded somewhere inside and at once all the men began to gravitate toward the dining-room.

Dick waited till six-fifteen, and then entered the main room again.

"Yonder is the dining-room," said the proprietor, pointing to a small door.

Dick entered and confronted the porter seated at a small table on which lay a conductor's punch.

He used this to punch the meal tickets of those who took table board only at the house.

"Take a seat anywhere at them four tables," said the porter.

"Miss Long told me to go to her table," replied Dick.

"You are a friend of the Longs, then? That's their table under the winder."

As Dick started toward it Susanne Long and her father entered the dining-room.

They reached the table almost as soon as he.

"Father," said Susanne, "this is Mr. Alvord, the boy who saved me in the pass this afternoon from the two bandits. Mr. Alvord, my father."

The mining king of Redrock grasped Dick by the hand and shook it warmly.

"My dear young man, my daughter has told me of the service you rendered her, and I assure you that you have placed us both under the strongest of obligations. I thank you from my heart for so bravely coming to my dear child's rescue, and I want you to understand that I shall not forget the debt I owe you."

"That's all right, sir. As I told Miss Long, I don't think I did any more than I ought to have done under the circumstances," replied Dick.

"You showed extraordinary nerve for a boy unused to such a situation as you found yourself in. Once more I thank you, and you will hereafter consider me your warm friend. Sit down. As long as you remain with us, which I hope will be for some time, you will consider yourself my guest and eat with us at this table," said Mr. Long.

Dick bowed acquiescence.

He felt that he would be more at home with his new friends than at one of the long tables with the general company.

The Longs had a special waitress who looked after their wants, and she now came forward to take their orders and Dick's.

"You have told my daughter a good deal about yourself, and the object of your visit to the camp, all of which she has repeated to me, consequently I feel as if I was already pretty well acquainted with you," said the mining king. "I understand that you have come into possession of Dan Harker's claim, which he called the Red Crow."

"Yes, sir."

"I am sorry to learn that Harker is dead. He was a good fellow as men go in this locality. He willed his mining claim to you in gratitude for the effort you made to save his life in New York, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the object of your visit here is to learn what your legacy amounts to?"

Dick nodded.

"I will talk with you about it after supper. I am naturally well posted in everything connected with the mining interests of this section, and can give you all the information you want. Now, I see my daughter desires to have

something to say to you, so I will not monopolize your attention."

After that the conversation became general, and by the time they had finished the other tables were deserted, save by two or three late comers.

As they were leaving the room, Susanne proposed a walk to Dick, saying, with a smile, that she would show him the town, and when they got back he could talk mining matters with her father.

Dick agreed, and they started off together like old friends.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK'S INTERVIEW WITH THE MINING KING.

Susanne and Dick walked up one side of the street and down on the other, by which time it was dark, and coal oil lamps and gasoline torches illuminated the little hamlet.

When they returned to the hotel Dick noticed that he was regarded with a new interest and not a little respect.

Mr. Long had spread the news of his conduct in the pass that afternoon, and the result was he achieved a considerable amount of popularity for a newcomer.

Everybody was anxious to make his acquaintance, and as soon as he joined the mining king, Mr. Long proceeded to introduce him around.

In fact, Dick held a regular reception on the hotel veranda, for there were constant additions to the crowd, as those who went away circulated the news of Dick's rescue of Susanne, and how he had, single handed, wiped out the two bandits, after taking their fire at close range.

Dick needed no better introduction to the mining camp, and before morning there was hardly any one in the place that hadn't heard about his exploit in the pass, and, of course, popular opinion voted him the pluckiest tenderfoot who had ever come to Redrock.

The boy found no chance that evening to have a private talk with Mr. Long.

The mining king, however, told him he would be glad to see him in the morning at his office, located at the Susanne mine, which was the boss producer of the camp.

Dick said he would call, and feeling in need of rest, he retired to his room.

Susanne and her father were at breakfast when he entered the dining-room on the following morning, and he joined them, receiving a warm greeting.

After breakfast Susanne took possession of Dick.

"Do you ride horseback?" she asked.

"Yes, I can ride some, but I'm not an expert like yourself," he replied. "You are certainly a very graceful rider, Miss Long. I noted that fact yesterday before those rascals held you up."

"Thank you for the compliment," she answered with a smile.

"Well, you deserve it."

"I was going to propose a ride," she said. "One of our men brought my mare back early this morning. You can get a horse of Mr. Jenkins, the proprietor of this house. After I have shown you a bit of the country we'll stop at my father's office, and then you can talk with him about your mining claim."

"All right. I'm on," said Dick.

The hostler of the hotel furnished Dick with a saddle

horse, bringing the animal, with Susanne's mare, around in front.

The young people mounted and galloped off together.

Two hours later they rode up to the main building on the Susanne mine, and went into the office, where they found Mr. Long.

The girl stayed only a few minutes, saying that she would return to the hotel alone, and that she expected to see Dick at dinner.

"Now, you want to know something about the Red Crow claim," said Mr. Long to Dick. "To begin with, it is merely a claim and not a mine, and it is situated some little distance outside the silver belt."

"Am I to understand, then, that, in your opinion, it has little value as a mining property?" said Dick, somewhat disappointed.

"Well, Dan Harker insisted that he had found indications of rich silver ore, but I will tell you frankly that I put very little faith in his statement, although I recognized him as an expert prospector. He made me a proposition which I didn't care to accept, chiefly because I have my hands pretty full with looking after the five mines I control, and which practically cover the entire silver district. There are other mines in operation on the borders of my properties, but they are not what may be called howling successes. I have to all intents and purposes a monopoly on the present output of silver ore in this district, and my claims have proved rich propositions—the Susanne, named after my daughter, the best of all."

"I suppose you figure, from experience, that the claims outside of the known silver belt are rather problematical as mining propositions?" said Dick.

"Yes, that is the way I look at it. Several outside claims have been promoted and worked, with results that justify my statement. Only the mines that have been opened up adjoining my own have amounted to anything as paying producers, and, as I said, they are not meeting the anticipations of their owners. The further away a claim is, the less chance there is that it will turn out to be valuable, though I will admit there are exceptions to the rule. Such exceptions are very noticeable in the Goldfield and Bullfrog districts, and other camps of Nevada, but here nothing has as yet happened to show that any of the outlying claims are worth their salt."

"I don't want to trespass on your kindness, Mr. Long, but I would ask you if you would be willing to assist me in proving or disproving the facts that Dan Harker asserted about the value of his Red Crow claim. I have these facts all noted down on paper, but it will cost something to demonstrate their accuracy, and I have no funds of my own to pay for the necessary work," said Dick.

"My dear boy, don't talk about trespassing on my kindness. I owe you a debt of gratitude that I could not fully repay, even with my present fortune. I will help you look into your property in order that you may know the truth. If you will show me the facts you have mentioned I will be able to determine just what can be done about them. It is quite possible that Harker's assertions are correct, though he was so reticent about divulging them to me, fearing, perhaps, that I might take some undue advantage of him, which was an injustice to me, as I have made it the rule of my life to do unto others as I would have others

do to me, that I gave very little consideration to his claims."

"What were his claims?"

"That the silver lode, which ends just outside of the Susanne property, was continued in the Red Crow."

"That is one of the facts he told me, and I have the locations he gave me to prove the truth of it."

"I remember he told me all that at the time he wanted me to take an interest in his claim, but he would not show me the locations where he had made his alleged discoveries. I felt offended at his lack of confidence in me, and called the matter off. If you will give me his proofs I will put an expert to work at once on your claim to verify them. If the result is satisfactory I will open up your property at my expense. Should the lode be developed on the Red Crow you stand every chance of becoming a rich mine owner, and no one would be better pleased at that than myself."

"Thank you, Mr. Long. Here is the paper. I'll leave it with you. Take whatever steps you deem right."

"I will look it over after dinner. In the meanwhile I will deposit it in my safe. By the way, have you taken your documents relating to your ownership of the claim to the county clerk's office in Florence? If not, you should lose no time in doing so."

"I have attended to the matter before coming here."

"I am glad to hear it. That will prevent possible complications. I see you are a business boy."

"I lost no time in doing it, for I think an attempt was made to deprive me of the documents."

"Indeed! How, may I ask?"

"I met a man, I am sure now is a rascal, in Phoenix. His name was Bud Dalton——"

"Bud Dalton!" exclaimed the mining king, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes. He acted in such a frank and friendly way toward me that I suppose I was flattered by the attention he paid me, a stranger. At any rate, I foolishly confided to him the errand that brought me to the State, and was taking me to Redrock. He was interested, and led me on till I guess there wasn't much I didn't tell him. I asked him what was the nearest point on the railroad to this mining camp. He told me to get off at Tuscarora station."

"Tuscarora station!"

"Exactly. As I believed he was directing me right I bought a ticket the day before yesterday for that place. On my arrival late in the afternoon, I found it was a pretty scaly-looking place—little better than a siding for freight cars, with a few houses near by, and a road leading off somewhere in the distance. Dalton had directed me to find a man named Sam Hickey, who, he said, would sell me a horse cheap, and show me the trail that would take me right to Redrock. Fortunately, I had some conversation with the station agent before I started to look Hickey up, and he told me that Dalton and Hickey both had tough reputations, and were suspected of having some connection with the mountain bandits, a gang of ruffians who were the terror of the county. I took the agent's advice and didn't try to make Hickey's acquaintance; but I met him afterward accidentally, and he tried to sell me a horse and get me to travel to this place by the trail. I wouldn't have it. That night I stopped at the agent's house, and

during the night was aroused by a man getting in at the window. He proved to be Hickey, who was after my suit case."

Dick then went on to tell Mr. Long what happened after he discovered the intruder, and how the rascal failed to get away with the suit case.

"He narrowly escaped the bullet I sent after him, and disappeared in the darkness after threatening the agent," concluded Dick. "So it looks to me as if Bud Dalton was anxious to get hold of the documents I told him I had with me, and that he sent word in some way to his pal, Hickey, to do me up, or, at least, get the suit case away from me, thinking he had paved the way to the outrage by sending me into Hickey's clutches at Tuscarora station."

"You had a narrow escape of it, young man," said Mr. Long. "Bud Dalton and Sam Hickey are suspected of being spies of the mountain bandits, but they are so cautious that sufficient evidence to lead to their arrest has not yet been found against them. Hickey's attempt to rob you, however, will give the sheriff the chance he has been looking for to jug that rascal, and Dalton is bound to see his finish before long. Now we will go to dinner, and after the meal, you and my daughter must get ready to go by the stage to Florence to push the case against those two ruffians who held Susanne up yesterday afternoon. The stage starts at three, and I will be on hand to go with you, since after what has happened I am afraid to let my daughter leave here except under my protection."

Mr. Long locked his desk, shut up his safe, and accompanied Dick to the hotel, where they arrived soon after the gong had sounded.

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTURED BY THE BANDITS.

That afternoon, Mr. Long, his daughter and Dick went to Florence by stage and put up at the Florence House.

The mining king saw the chief of police and it was arranged that the two bandits be brought before the court on the following morning.

That evening Dick took Susanne to a show at the small opera house given by a company of third-rate Thespians who were touring Arizona.

On their way back to the hotel after the show the two young people, whose movements had been watched by friends of the captured bandits from the moment they entered the town, were suddenly surrounded by four armed men, and before Dick could make a move to protect his fair companion, both were seized, gagged and hustled up a dark street, where horses stood waiting.

Dick and Susanne were bound on the back of one of the animals, the ruffians mounted the other horses, and, without hardly a word being spoken since the hold-up, the party started off at a rapid gait for the San Topaz range.

The leader of the gang held the rope that guided the animal on which the prisoners were bound, and he led the way.

The feelings of Dick and Susanne may be better imagined than described.

Though bound close together they could not communicate with each other, owing to the gags that stopped their mouths.

That they were in the hands of unknown enemies there could be no doubt, and what their fate was to be was a problem for the present.

In the course of an hour the party entered the mountains through a wild and rocky ravine a mile north of Dead Man's Pass.

After that the difficulties of the way made progress slow, and more than another hour elapsed before a sudden turn of the dangerous pathway they were threading up in the heart of the range brought them to a cave before the entrance of which a bright fire was burning.

A solitary watcher, who looked after the fire, sat on a small boulder near the mouth of the cave, rifle in hand.

"Well, Barney, we've got 'em," said the leader of the new arrivals.

"I see yer have," replied Barney in a tone of satisfaction.

"Are the boys in the cave?"

"Every mother's son of 'em have been asleep this hour past," replied Barney.

"There's no call to wake 'em. We'll take our prisoners into the inner cave and there they'll stay till the cap'n turns up and we decide what we'll do with the boy. As for the gal, she's worth \$20,000 to us, and we'll soon make it plain to Redrock's silver king that if he don't stump up he'll never see his daughter ag'in."

"So that's the chap who shot Burns and Mullen in the pass and rescued the gal after they had her nabbed?" said Barney, looking curiously at Dick, as the man lifted him with Susanne from the horse.

"That's the rooster," answered the other, whose name was Hodge.

"He's only a boy, and doesn't look as if he could put up the fight I've heard he did," said Barney. "Blessed if I see how he could get the best of Burns and Mullen. He must have took 'em off their guard."

"He's a game bird just the same," replied Hodge; "and knows how to handle a gun as slick as anybody 'round these diggin's. If he couldn't do that, Burns and Mullen wouldn't be in jail now, and the tenderfoot would be a subject for a coroner. Now that we've got him and the gal in our clutches the Florence authorities won't be able to do much to our pals, for there ain't no witnesses to push the case ag'in 'em."

"The authorities will hold 'em all right, on the ground that the witnesses have been spirited away by interested parties."

"We've got a lawyer to look out for 'em, and he won't let 'em be held any longer than the law'll allow."

"I dunno," replied Barney, doubtfully. "I wouldn't care to take Burns' and Mullen's chances of gettin' off soon. The sheriff will swear they are a part of our band, and he has made it pretty plain that he intends to root us out and put every one of us in the jug."

"Let him go hang," sneered Hodge. "He and his posse have been tryin' hard for the last three months to catch us, but what has his efforts amounted to? Nothin' at all."

"When d'ye expect the cap'n?"

"To-morrer some time."

"Seems to me he's stayed a long time away this trip. What's he doin' in Phoenix, anyway?"

"That's his business."

"And ours, too," growled Barney.

"Wal, I'm goin' to turn in. Let the fire die down now. Who relieves you?"

"Simms."

"Tell him to keep the fire goin' just enough to last till mornin'."

"I will," said Barney, picking up his rifle as Hodge entered the cave.

In the meantime, Dick and Susanne had been placed in separate corners of the small inner cave.

The girl's hands were bound behind her back, while Dick was secured both hand and foot.

The gags were removed from the mouths of the prisoners, that precaution being no longer regarded as necessary.

Then the ruffians left them alone.

"Oh, Mr. Alvord, what shall we do?" cried Susanne from her corner. "We're in the hands of the mountain bandits. My father will be crazy about my disappearance. He must be scouring Florence for us at this moment."

"I can't say what we will be able to do; but of one thing be certain, I will save you even at the cost of my life," replied Dick.

"How brave you are!" she answered. "I am afraid we will be watched too closely for you to do anything. I will be held for ransom, while you——"

"May be killed out of revenge for causing the capture of Mullen and Burns."

"No, no; they must not kill you. I will tell them that my father will ransom you with me," Susanne said earnestly. "I should never be happy again if anything happened to you."

"Thank you, Miss long, for——"

"Don't call me Miss Long. Call me Susanne."

"I will on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you do not call me Mr. Alvord but Dick."

"I agree. We will be Dick and Susanne to each other after this."

"Your feet are free, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"Only your wrists are bound?"

"That's all."

"Then get up and come close to me. Bring your hands close to my mouth, and I will see if I can unloosen the knot with my teeth. If I can free you, then you can cut me loose, for you will find my jackknife in my pocket."

"And what then?" asked the girl, as she came up to him.

"We must trust to luck," he replied.

After that there was silence while he gnawed at the rope that held her hands together.

Dick had good teeth, but it was a hard job to loosen the knot, although from the fact that the ruffian who tied her had a girl to deal with he had not made it as tight as he otherwise would have done.

After a long and persistent effort the cord was sufficiently loosened to enable Susanne to draw out one of her slender hands at Dick's bidding.

The other followed as a matter of course.

"Now you're free, Susanne."

"Thank you, Dick. You're the finest boy in the world."

"No compliments, please. Put your hand in my right trouser pocket and get my jackknife."

Susanne did so.

"Now cut me loose."

It was the work of but a few moments for the girl to accomplish this, and Dick stood up a free boy once more.

"Now, you remain here till I investigate," said Dick.

"Do be careful," begged Susanne.

"Sure; I've got you to take care of, so I don't mean to take any more chances than I can help," he replied.

His eyes being now accustomed to the gloom of the rear cave, he could see objects pretty well.

Going to the entrance that opened into the large cave in front Dick counted eight forms stretched out on the floor in slumber.

"I'll bet we could pass them all right, but outside there is a man on guard, and that is the obstacle that lies in the way of our escape. He must be disposed of first before we can leave the camp," said the boy to himself.

He picked his way among the sleepers with great care and glanced outside.

Barney was seated on the boulder, with his rifle across his lap, smoking.

He was evidently wide awake.

The fire had gone down to a mass of glowing embers, but the night was not dark, for the sky was brilliant with stars.

Dick kept his eye on Barney and considered.

Finally he decided to return to the inner cave and consult with Susanne.

"We could easily escape but for the watcher outside," he told the girl. "Now, the problem is to put him out of business without raising an alarm. With your help it may be done. Have you the nerve to help me out?"

"I am ready to do anything you say, Dick," answered Susanne.

"You're a brave girl, Susanne. Most girls would hesitate to face the danger."

"I will face any danger you do," she said, earnestly.

"We might as well take our chances, for we'll have none in the morning, when the men are all astir. They'll find us free, and will take extra precautions in consequence. This is the only opportunity we'll have to get away. I've brought two rifles. You can shoot, I suppose, if you have to?"

"I can," she replied.

"My plan is to creep up behind the watcher and throw my arms around him. Before he can cry out you must gag him by tying my handkerchief around his mouth. Then you must tie him with the line used on us, which you must take on your arm. It is a ticklish job all around, but if we act quick it may succeed. I rely some on the surprise our action will give him. You mustn't lose a moment in gagging him after I have grabbed him. He is probably stronger than me, but I'll hang on to him like grim death. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Come, then, follow me."

He led her to the entrance to the cave.

Barney was still smoking and gazing reflectively at the glowing embers of the fire, which threw his stalwart figure somewhat into relief.

Susanne held the handkerchief in both hands ready to do her part.

They crept upon the unsuspecting watcher.

Suddenly Dick grabbed Barney with a viselike grip around the arms and chest.

Susanne sprang in front of him and tied the handkerchief about his mouth.

Barney was taken so by surprise that he did not make a struggle until he had been gagged.

Then he woke up to the situation.

"Quick! Tie him, Susanne," cried Dick.

Taking the rope from her arm she proceeded to do it, but was greatly hampered by the man's struggles.

Dick finally succeeded in pulling him off the rock and tripping him on his face.

Then he held him down while the girl tied his arms behind his back.

"Now his legs," said Dick.

That was an easier proposition for her, and at last they had the watcher dead to rights.

Dick then dragged him away off down the path, Susanne following with the two rifles.

Reaching a thick clump of bushes, Dick dumped the man into it, after seeing that the gag was secure.

"Now to get out of the mountains if we can, and find our way back to Redrock," said Dick, relieving Susanne of one of the rifles, and starting down the mountain path with the girl by his side.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIGHT IN THE PASS.

"Those rascals will be mightily surprised in the morning when they discover that we are missing," said Dick.

"Yes," replied Susanne.

"You're a nervy girl, and didn't make a false move when everything depended on speed and coolness. I couldn't have succeeded but for you."

"I followed your directions, and knew exactly what you expected of me."

"You did fine. When I tell your father he'll be prouder of you than ever. I'll bet the boys of Redrock will give you an ovation when they hear about your grit."

"I thank you for your commendation, but I am sure I never would have dared to do it but for you. I felt that you were risking your life for me, and I was resolved to aid you all I could."

"And you did like a little major," replied Dick, emphatically. "You are a girl in a thousand, and I consider myself honored by your acquaintance."

"Oh, dear, you will make me dreadfully conceited," laughed Susanne.

"Nonsense! Girls like you have level heads and do not get conceited."

"Now, Dick, you mustn't throw so many bouquets at me," protested the girl. "If you don't stop I'll tell you what I think of you."

"As long as you think well of me I'm satisfied."

"Can I think otherwise? You are the bravest, pluckiest boy in all——"

"That'll do now, Susanne. Cut it out, for we are still up to our eyes in difficulty. We may lose ourselves in these

wilds and finally have to lie down to die in some untrodden spot like two babes in the wood."

"I think not," replied the girl, confidently. "This path leads straight down the range to the ravine we entered, and once there we ought to have no trouble in finding our way out on the plain."

"I hope so."

The path, however, presented increasing difficulties as they continued down.

There were places where it failed them entirely, and they had to hunt about to find it, and then by-paths led off it that were scarcely to be distinguished from the main one they were following, so that Dick's fears that they might be lost in the range were not wholly unfounded.

Dick carried Susanne in his arms across several shallow mountain streams, and supported her steps when she grew faint and weary after several hours of tramping.

At last they reached the ravine which they remembered was the one they had entered the range through, and they felt encouraged.

If nothing happened to them here they might soon expect to reach the plain, a mile or so north of the pass that led to Redrock.

As they sat down on a boulder to rest before they tackled the last stage of the journey out of the range they suddenly heard the gallop of horses coming toward them.

"Quick, Susanne, let us get out of sight," said Dick.

Accordingly, they drew back among the trees and brush.

A shallow stream ran across the path at that spot.

In a few moments two horsemen came dimly into sight, and when they reached the stream they reined in their animals to allow them to drink.

The tones of the men's voices as they sat their saddles sounded familiar to the boy.

Peering out at them he recognized one as Bud Dalton and the other as Hickey.

Their appearance at this part of the range indicated that they were on their way to the cave of the mountain bandits, with whom they were doubtless connected.

In a few minutes they continued on their way, and when the thud of their animals' hoofs died away Dick and Susanne came out of their hiding place.

"That was Bud Dalton and his pal, Sam Hickey," said the boy as they walked on. "Dalton is the man I met at the hotel in Phoenix, and who purposely misdirected me on my way to Redrock in order that I might fall into the clutches of his associate. I told you how I met Hickey at Tuscarora station. He's a hard case. It's a good thing they did not see us or there would have been some shooting done."

Half an hour later they got out of the range at last and started for Dead Man's Pass.

They reached it in about twenty minutes and turned their faces toward Redrock.

They had accomplished half the distance when the sound of horsemen at a rapid gallop reached their ears.

"Who can that be?" said Susanne. "Perhaps my father and some of his friends on the way to the camp to start all the boys on a general hunt through the range for us."

"Or it may be part of the bandits on our trail," replied Dick. "We must hide, for we can't afford to take any chances."

The gray dawn was just beginning to lighten up the eastern sky.

Dick looked around for some spot for his companion and himself to conceal themselves in.

There were some boulders on the mountain side, and they scrambled up and hid behind these.

As Dick dived out of sight the crack of a rifle somewhere in the near distance on the mountain side awoke the echoes of the range and a bullet whizzed by the boy's head.

"We're discovered and will have to stand the rascals off as long as we can. The worst of it is we're hemmed in. That shot came from yonder, while the horsemen are coming up the pass," said Dick.

At that moment six horsemen came into sight and began to slow down.

Five dismounted and turned their animals over to the sixth man, who remained behind while the others advanced.

Dick and Susanne could now hear men descending the mountain and shouting to their companions in the pass.

"I'm afraid it will soon be all up with us, Susanne," said Dick; "but I mean to defend you to the last gasp. You must help me out the best you can. Make sure of your mark when you fire. These rascals must pay dearly for our recapture. The firing may be heard in Redrock and bring help, but it will probably be too late to do us any good."

At length the rascals above got close enough to their friends in the road to tell them where the fugitives were hiding, and then a rush was made for the boulders.

Dick and Susanne took careful aim at the two men in advance and their rifles cracked almost together.

Both bandits were hit and went tumbling back into the road.

The ruffians were evidently taken by surprise and stopped.

They had no idea that the fugitives were armed.

Before they recovered Dick and the girl fired again, and a third bandit threw up his arms with a cry and dropped.

In another moment the scoundrels sought cover and began firing at the boulders.

Under cover of the fire several of them began creeping up in a roundabout way toward the hiding place of the fugitives.

The sky was now growing lighter every moment, and Dick and Susanne were better able to detect the movements of their enemies.

This they could do in spite of the fire they were subjected to as long as the shooting came from below.

Dick watched from one side of their breastworks and Susanne from the other.

They fired only when they felt sure of reaching their mark, for they had only a few cartridges in their magazine rifles, and when they had expended them they would be wholly at the mercy of their enemies.

Five of the rascals had so far been put out of business, though whether any of these had been killed the fugitives could not tell.

Their shooting had been so effective that the bandits were afraid to make a rush, but they were gradually turning both flanks of the besieged, and it was merely a question of time before the villains would prevail unless something turned up to queer their plans.

As it happened, something did turn up.

If it hadn't the hero of this story would never have got out of the pass alive.

It was a calm, still morning, and the firing was heard by the early risers in Redrock.

The early risers were mostly miners who had been aroused by a messenger from Florence who had reached the camp a short time before with word that Susanne Long and the young stranger from the East had disappeared the night before, and it was suspected they had been kidnapped from the town by disguised bandits and taken into the range.

The message was an order from the mining king to his employees to arm themselves and scour the range in small parties.

A dozen of them were already mounted and prepared to set out when the sound of shooting in the direction of the pass reached their ears.

They lost no time in spurring in that direction as hard as they could go, with their rifles ready for business.

They dashed up the declivity and rushed into the pass like a whirlwind.

As the firing continued at frequent intervals they were at no loss to locate the exact spot where the trouble was.

The bandits were fast closing in on Dick and Susanne, who had almost exhausted their cartridges, and their fate seemed about settled, when the party from Redrock came upon the scene.

The rascals heard their approach in time to scatter for safety.

Those who had come on horseback rushed for their animals, mounted and rode at breakneck speed down the pass, leading three horses with them, the owners of which lay wounded in the road.

The other bandits who had come down the mountain, made off the way they had come with the utmost speed, leaving two of their number hors du combat.

The rescue party did some shooting, but it was without result.

As soon as the identity of the newcomers was discovered by Susanne and Dick, the young people showed themselves and were received with general acclamation.

In a few words they told their story, and the miners congratulated them on their escape from the bandits, and complimented them on the plucky stand they had made against recapture.

Susanne, knowing that her father was worried to death over her disappearance the night before, decided not to go on to Redrock, but to return to Florence at once.

She called on the miners to act as an escort to her and Dick.

They readily agreed, and an hour later the party reached the Florence House and Susanne was in her delighted and thankful father's arms.

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE MOUTH OF THE SHAFT.

"You stood nobly by my dear child, and have increased the debt of gratitude that I already owe you," said Mr. Long to Dick, after he had heard the story of the night's adventure from his daughter's lips.

"You don't suppose I would desert her, even if I could,

have saved myself by so doing?" replied the boy. "She was in my care when I took her to the show, and, of course, it was my duty to look out for her. However, she did her share toward our escape, and I'm bound to say that she's the nerviest little girl I ever met. She never flinched under the fire of the bandits, and the way the bullets pinged around us was enough to try any one's courage."

After a wash up Dick and Susanne went to breakfast with Mr. Long, and later on they appeared in court when Burns and Mullen were brought up for examination.

Their testimony was enough to cause the judge to hold the two rascals for trial, and they were sent back to jail.

Dick, Susanne and the mining king returned to Redrock after dinner.

The camp knew all about the young people's abduction from Florence, their escape from their captors, and the desperate stand they had made against the bandits in the pass, consequently they received an ovation on entering the place.

Next morning, Mr. Long having satisfied himself that there was something in the declaration of the late Dan Harker that there was silver ore in the Red Crow claim, sent an expert prospector to the property to verify the dead man's conclusions.

The report he made bore out Harker's assertion, and on the strength of it Mr. Long told Dick that he would open up a mine on the property at his own expense.

It was arranged that Dick would superintend the opening up of his own mine under the advice and assistance of one of the mining king's superintendents.

The boy insisted that Mr. Long should keep an account of the money he advanced for the purpose of developing the mine, the same to be repaid out of the profits of production.

The mining king agreed to this proposal with evident reluctance, but Dick was firm on the point and would not have it otherwise.

On Monday morning ground was broken for a shaft, and Dick was on hand with the superintendent to see the work commenced.

Suitable machinery was ordered for the proper development of the mine, and a couple of carpenters were engaged to put up the necessary buildings.

As soon as the larger one, which was to house the engine and boiler, was well under way Dick established his office there.

Every morning the superintendent visited the growing mine and after inspecting what had been accomplished the day before, gave Dick instructions to go by that day.

Susanne was a daily visitor at the Red Crow claim, and was very much interested in the progress of the work.

"You'll be a rich boy, Dick, if the men strike the lode that Harker claimed is continued on your property. My father thinks you'll strike it, for the outcroppings all indicate the presence of paying ore in your mine," she said.

"I'm confident that Harker knew what he was talking about," replied Dick, "and now that the chance is mine I intend to prove it."

"While my father admires your independence he regrets that you will not accept his money except as a loan."

"I always intended to hew my own way in the world,

and I mean to stick as close to that plan as I can. A fellow with any spirit always feels better if he works his way himself to fortune instead of letting somebody else help him to it. Of course, when one is strapped like I am, it is necessary for him to accept some financial assistance, but if it is understood that he is to repay the loan when he can, why, then he feels independent."

Dick pushed the work on his mine as fast as possible, and the character of the ore that came to the surface justified the expectation that he was touching upon a vein that seemed as valuable as that which had made the Susanne mine a big success.

The development of the Red Crow claim was eagerly watched by the owners of outside claims around him, and the men who owned property on either side of him also began to work their claims, hoping to reach results as satisfactory as Dick's mine was panning out.

The working of the new mines brought more miners to Redrock, and that, naturally, increased the population of the camp to some extent.

Several of the men that Dick's foreman hired were hard-looking characters.

They looked as wicked as any of the bandits the boy had lately encountered.

But looks didn't interfere with a man getting employment in the Redrock mines.

Dick noticed that several of the best miners in the Susanne mine were mighty tough-looking chaps, so he did not find any fault with the men who went to work on the Red Crow so long as they did their duty.

He noticed that two of his new hands seemed to be watching him in a covert way whenever he came where they were.

At first he paid little attention to this circumstance, believing that his late exploits with the bandits caused the men to regard him with special interest.

But he soon had reason to change his mind on the subject.

One evening after supper he returned to his mine office to get a book on mining he wanted to go over.

He would have stayed at the office only it was too lonely there after work had ceased for the day and night had fallen upon the landscape.

The mines were deserted at that hour, save by the watchmen.

Dick had employed no watchmen as yet, for there was little property on his place to protect, and thieves were unknown at the camp, anyway, as the miners had a summary way of dealing with such characters that discouraged the business.

Soon after Dick left the hotel Susanne came down from her room to find him.

As he wasn't on the veranda she entered the public room and made inquiries at the desk.

Jenkins told her that Alvord had gone out to his mine.

"What! At this hour!" she exclaimed in some surprise. "Did he say why he was going there?"

"He said he had forgotten to bring something from the office that he wanted."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Only a few minutes."

"How provoking!" exclaimed Susanne to herself, as she

walked outside and stood looking in the direction of the mines. "I wanted him to go with me to the Hardy ranch."

She had forgotten to tell Dick at supper about the invitation she had received from her particular friend, Dora Hardy, that afternoon, begging her to come over to the ranch that evening and bring Dick with her.

As her mare had gone lame Susanne had ordered the proprietor of the hotel to have his buggy hitched up and brought around to the side door at seven o'clock.

As she stood looking northward into the darkness beyond the end of the long, lighted street, the hostler appeared, leading the vehicle.

"I know what I'll do," she said suddenly, as her eyes rested on the horse and buggy. "I'll drive out to the Red Crow claim, meet Dick and take him straight to the ranch. He won't refuse to go, I know, for whatever I say goes with him."

She darted up to her room, got her hat, and a few minutes later was driving out in the direction of the mines.

In the meantime, Dick had reached his property and was walking toward the building where his office was, quite unconscious that he was being dogged by two men in the darkness.

These men were the two miners who had shown a great deal of interest in him from the day they started to work for him.

They were brawny, hard-looking fellows, who had given their names as Duncan and Swiveler, and they did not fraternize with the other miners to any great extent.

Every night they hung around a saloon on the opposite side of the street from the hotel, and kept their eyes on Dick whenever he appeared outside.

On this evening they followed him as he started away from the hotel on his errand to the mine.

They did not think he was going out there, but hoped they might find a chance to catch him unawares some place where they would not be observed.

When they saw him go out into the country beyond the end of the street they uttered a grunt of satisfaction.

"He's our meat to-night," remarked Swiveler. "He's going out to the mine."

"We couldn't have a better chance to do him up," replied Duncan. "After the job is done we'll rejoin the band and report the success of our mission."

"He has caused the capture of seven of our lads, every one of whom he has wounded badly, so it's high time he got what is comin' to him," said Swiveler.

"He'll get it. He's hurt us wuss than the sheriff and his posse. He's the toughest tenderfoot I ever come across," said Duncan.

They were close behind Dick when the boy approached his office door with the key in his hand.

As the boy inserted the key in the lock they dashed upon him, and Swiveler struck him down with a blow from the butt of his revolver.

Without a cry Dick rolled over unconscious.

"Now we'll take him into the buildin' and put a couple of balls in his heart," said Duncan.

"No. I know a better and safer way of dealin' with him," said Swiveler.

"What's your plan?"

"We'll drag him to the mouth of the shaft and drop

him in. Then it'll look as if he fell in by accident, and murder will not be suspected."

"All right, though we don't care whether the people here think he's murdered or not, for we'll be a long ways from here by daylight."

Confident that the place was quite deserted, the men went leisurely to work about the commission of their contemplated crime.

Swiveler entered the office, picked up a lantern and lighted it.

They needed some light to avoid falling into the shaft themselves in the darkness.

Then they proceeded to drag the senseless boy to the yawning hole in the middle of the claim.

While they were thus employed Susanne drove up in the buggy.

The horse and wheels made scarcely any sound in the soft earth, and so the two rascals were not aware of her approach.

When they thought they were near the shaft they dropped Dick and went forward with the lantern to locate the opening.

Leaving the lantern beside the hole, Swiveler returned and grabbed Dick by the legs.

The ruffian was dragging the senseless boy to the mouth of the shaft, intending to drop him in the mine, when there sounded a wild shriek.

A girl, alighting from a carriage, rushed toward them, screaming:

"Stop that, you villains!"

The girl was Susanne, and she did not consider the danger she might be running into by confronting two murderous scoundrels in that lonesome spot.

The rascals turned and looked at her, quite staggered by her unexpected appearance on the scene.

CHAPTER XII.

SUSANNE SAVES DICK.

"Blame it. It's a girl!" cried Swiveler.

"We must silence her," said Duncan, in a savage tone.

Swiveler picked up the lantern and flashed the light on Susanne.

The moment the ruffians saw her face they recognized her.

"It's old man Long's daughter," said Duncan. "Here's luck! We'll nab her and take her away with us as soon as we've finished the tenderfoot."

He made a spring toward her.

"Stand back, you villain!" she cried, covering him with the revolver she always carried when she went abroad alone.

"What are you doing to Mr. Alvord?"

"What business is that of yours, miss?" demanded Duncan, doggedly.

"You'll find even if I am a girl I can protect him from such villains as you men are," she pluckily replied.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Swiveler, sardonically. "You can't protect yourself, let alone him. Just drop that gun or I'll have to wing you," and he drew his revolver.

Susanne, conscious that her safety, as well as Dick's depended on swift action, turned her revolver on the speaker and fired at him point blank.

With a cry he clapped his hand to his breast, staggered back, lost his balance, and fell into the mouth of the shaft.

With an imprecation Duncan yanked his gun out; but Susanne was quicker than he.

The bullet broke his right arm, and with a shriek of agony the revolver fell from his hand.

Susanne, wound up to a pitch of desperation, fired at him again.

With another cry he staggered back and then fell upon his face, lying quite still.

Susanne then rushed to Dick and taking his head in her lap, besought him to speak to her.

Dick, however, was quite unconscious of her anxious solicitude.

The crack he had received had raised a big lump on his head, and put him out of business for the time being.

"Dear, dear Dick, do open your eyes and speak to me," she cried, her tears falling on his white face, that looked somewhat ghastly in the light of the lantern.

While she was trying to bring him to, the watchman from the adjoining mine, who had heard the shooting, came running over to see what the trouble was about.

He was astonished when he recognized the mining king's daughter bending over the senseless owner of the Red Crow claim.

"What has happened, miss?" he asked, seeing the body of Duncan stretched out close by where he had fallen under the girl's fire.

"Please help me do something for Mr. Alvord," cried Susanne with feverish eagerness. "He's been badly hurt by two rascals who attacked him just before I came. Please do something to bring him to his senses."

The watchman bent down and felt of Dick's heart.

"He's not dead. He does not appear to have been shot. Ah, I see, a lump on his head. He's been struck down by something hard."

The watchman took out his whisky flask and poured some of the liquor down the boy's throat.

This revived him after a moment or two, and he looked up into Susanne's face.

"You here, Susanne?" he exclaimed, in a bewildered kind of way.

"Yes, yes. How did this terrible thing happen?" she asked.

"What's the matter? What has happened to me?"

"Don't you know?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"You have a great lump on your poor head. You were struck down by a couple of villains, both of whom I believe are wounded."

"Wounded!"

"Yes, I shot them both. One fell into the shaft, and the other lies over there," replied Susanne.

"You shot them, Susanne?" said the astonished boy, lifting his head out of her lap. "Why, what brought you to the mine?"

"I drove out after you when I heard that you started for this place. How do you feel now?"

"Better, but my head is terribly sore, and aches like fun."

"Take another drink, pard," said the watchman.

"No, I don't need it," he said, getting on his feet, assisted by the girl.

He felt kind of wobbly on his pins and staggered some. Susanne grabbed him by the arm and steadied him.

"Is that one of the chaps?" he asked her as the watchman turned the rascal on his back.

"Yes," she replied with a shudder, for now that the excitement was over she began to realize that she had probably badly injured two human beings.

"He's senseless," said the watchman. "He's been hit twice. His arm is broken and there is a ball somewhere in his carcass."

"Then he should be carried to a doctor at once," said Dick.

"If you can lift him into my buggy do so, and I will carry him to Doctor Smith," said Susanne to the watchman.

At that juncture two more men came on the scene.

They had been drawn by the firing, and came from the Susanne mine.

They recognized the girl, and wondered if she had been in another scrape.

The situation was explained to them, and they helped to put the badly wounded man into the buggy.

When they learned that the other ruffian had fallen down the shaft they said there was no doubt that his goose was cooked.

However, Dick asked them to get him up, which they could easily do by means of the ore-raising tub and the hand windlass.

Leaving them to attend to the matter, Dick helped Susanne into the buggy and then got in himself.

They drove as fast as possible to Doctor Smith's house, and on the way Susanne explained more fully the state of affairs when she arrived at the mine.

"It's dreadful to think that I have injured those men," she said; "but it was to save your life, and I do not regret what I did."

"I can't understand the object the men had in attacking me," replied Dick. "This wounded man is one of the hands employed on my mine. Whether his companion was also one of my workers I could not say until I see him. What they had against me is a mystery as far as I am concerned."

Doctor Smith was in his office reading when they drove up.

He came out at once and helped Dick carry the wounded man into his operating-room.

After examining him, the doctor said he was dangerously wounded, and it was doubtful whether he would recover.

He said the fellow would have to be taken to the hospital at Florence.

He probed for the bullet, located and extracted it.

Then he bound the wound up with antiseptics.

After that he fixed up the man's broken arm.

"That's the best I can do, except to revive him," he said.

In a short time Duncan regained consciousness.

When he saw Dick he scowled at him.

The boy asked him why he and his companion had at-

tacked him, but Duncan refused to make any explanation.

Dick and the doctor removed the wounded man to the office lounge and made him as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

Susanne, in the meanwhile, had returned to the hotel, where she hunted up her father and told him everything.

Mr. Long was astonished, and could not account for the attack which had been made on the young New Yorker.

When Dick returned to the hotel he told the particulars of the affair to a group of men on the veranda, and the news soon circulated all over the camp.

Next morning, when the miners went to work on the Red Crow claim, they saw the dead body of Swiveler stretched out at the end of one of the houses.

Duncan was removed to Florence in a wagon and the county coroner came over to Redrock to hold an inquest on Swiveler.

The verdict of the jury was that he came to his death through his fall into the mine, as it was shown that the bullet wound was not a fatal one.

Susanne was exonerated of any blame in the matter, and, in fact, was highly complimented for saving Dick Alvord's life.

Duncan was in the hospital some time, but eventually recovered and was tried for murderous assault on Dick, and sent to prison for a long term.

Before his fate was settled Mullen and Burns were tried and convicted, and so were the five bandits captured in the pass after their attack on Dick and Susanne, and the entire seven got what was coming to them.

Although the sheriff and a strong posse searched the range they did not find the rest of the band.

The rascals had evidently decamped and gone elsewhere.

At any rate, the mountains were rid of them, and one could now go through the pass without fear of being held up.

This afforded the mining king and all connected with Redrock much satisfaction, for the bandits had been a great menace to the neighborhood.

CHAPTER XIII.

SURPRISED BY THE BANDITS.

Work proceeded in the Red Crow mine steadily, and finally, after three weeks, the lode that Dick was looking for was brought to light, and pronounced by experts to be fully as rich as the lode in the Susanne mine.

Mr. Long came over and looked at it, and then congratulated the young mine owner on the realization of his hopes, which fully bore out all and even more than Dan Harker had claimed.

Of course, Susanne congratulated Dick, too, and so did everybody in Redrock.

The news circulated far and wide, and brought many new speculators to the camp.

Dick received several tempting offers from outside capitalists, who wanted to work the mine on a lease for a certain given term.

Their idea was to form a company, sell stock in it, and with the funds thus acquired, get out as much ore as they could within the time covered by the lease.

Dick would thus be relieved of all trouble and receive a certain percentage of the value of the ore taken out.

When the lease expired, it could either be renewed, taken up by another company, or Dick could work the mine himself with the capital he had acquired.

He might possibly have agreed to a proposition of this kind if he had not been backed by Mr. Long, but as the case stood, there was no call for him to divide up with outsiders, so he turned all the propositions down, and made preparations to work his mine on the scale that its output called for.

Claims were taken up beyond the Red Crow in the belief that the lode in his mine extended beyond the limit of his property, and things became livelier than ever in Redrock.

The railroad company yielded to the solicitations of Mr. Long and agreed to build a branch line from a point east of Florence through the valley up to Redrock, as the increasing output of silver ore promised to be an important factor in its traffic.

When the branch was completed it would be of immense benefit to Redrock, which now ceased to regard itself as a camp, and called itself a town.

Another hotel was in course of construction, a branch of the Florence Bank was opened there, more buildings put up, a newspaper started, and other modern improvements introduced, so that Redrock was already quite proud of itself.

Dick and Susanne continued to see each other constantly and a very warm attachment grew up between them.

Everybody noticed how the wind blew except her father, and it was looked upon as a certainty that some time in the future there would be a wedding in Redrock in which Dick and Susanne would figure as the principals.

When that event came off there would certainly be high jinks in the mining town and no mistake.

As soon as the machinery arrived the work in the Red Crow mine proceeded in downright earnest.

Dick was bossing the job himself now, as he had picked up all the information he needed, either from Mr. Long or the superintendent he had delegated to assist the boy at the start.

The ore panned out on similar lines with that taken from the Susanne mine, so that the Red Crow was considered the second best mine in Redrock.

As the days and weeks passed, Dick's bank account grew steadily, and out of it he paid for his machinery and was gradually reducing the debt he owed to Mr. Long.

The bandit band was heard from occasionally, but always at a distance.

It was known now that Bud Dalton was, and always had been, the leader and captain of the gang of desperadoes that composed it.

•Sam Hickey was his second in command, and both of them, as well as their followers, had it in for Dick, and they intended, when the chance offered, to get square with the boy.

They had a spy in Redrock watching his movements.

The rascal succeeded in getting a job in the Red Crow mine just as Swiveler and Duncan had done, and he kept Dalton informed of Dick's prosperity.

Dalton still had his eye on Susanne Long, although his

band had failed twice to hold her prisoner long enough to be of any advantage toward a ransom.

The rascal intended to make a third effort to get the girl in his power, feeling sure that if things worked right he could get \$50,000 out of her father for her return.

One afternoon the spy at the mine, whose name was Dillon, found out that Dick and Susanne were going to attend the firemen's ball in Florence on the following evening.

They were going to town by the afternoon stage, and would be accompanied by a number of other residents of Redrock.

Dillon also learned that the branch bank would send a considerable consignment of bullion by the same stage.

Here was an opportunity not to be neglected by the bandit band.

Accordingly, that evening, after he had had his supper, Dillon started on horseback to carry the news to Dalton.

He had a long ride before him, but he knew he could cover the ground by sunrise, and that would give Dalton time enough to make his preparations for a dash into his old district, where, with sufficient force, he could lie in ambush in Dead Man's Pass and give the passengers of the stage the surprise of their lives.

The animal Dillon rode was a good one and perfectly fresh when she started out soon after dark, and he made her go her limit.

The sun was just rising when he reached the new rendezvous of the bandit band, and was soon in the presence of Dalton.

His appearance indicated to the bandit captain that his subordinate had brought him news of some importance, and he was not disappointed.

Dillon told his story, and Dalton saw his opportunity and jumped at it.

He called the band around him and told them the news Dillon had brought, and then asked them if they were ready to take a hand in the enterprise he pointed out.

"We will make a big haul in silver bullion, to begin with," he said. "Then we will get old man Long's daughter into our hands and can hold her for a big ransom—\$50,000 at least. At the same time, we have the chance to capture that young Easterner who has caused us so much trouble. Once we get him into our clutches we'll make him dance to the tune of the dead march."

"Hold on, cap'n," said Dillon. "Revenge is all right in its way, but to my way of thinkin' money is better. He owns a rich mine, as you know, and is making money hand over fist. What's the matter with making him ransom himself for a hundred thousand? That's better than takin' his life, which won't put a cent in our pockets. What-d'ye say, boys?"

The crowd greeted his suggestion with acclamation.

The only one who objected was Sam Hickey, but his objection didn't carry much weight when it was a question of dollars and cents.

Dalton thought Dillon's proposal a good one, and placing it before the members of the band it was carried with hardly a dissenting voice.

Preparations were at once made for the expedition.

No time was to be lost as the bandits had a long ride

before them to reach the pass and ambush themselves by the time the stage passed through at four.

Dillon ate his breakfast with his pals and then set out on his return to Redrock.

When Dick Alvord returned to the hotel from his mine at noon for dinner he found Susanne and her father already at their table.

Dinner over, Dick returned to the mine and put in an hour or so there and then he rode back to the hotel to dress himself for the firemen's ball, to which he was to escort Susanne that evening.

There was room in the stage for nine inside, and the seats were all occupied when the vehicle started, with half a dozen more on the roof.

It was a jolly crowd, and there was no thought of danger in the mind of any.

Under the driver's seat were several boxes of silver bullion, and though two men well armed sat beside the driver to protect it, they did not expect to have their services called upon.

Everything went as merry as a marriage bell till the stage reached the wildest spot in the pass; then suddenly two masked men sprang out from the bushes and caught the horses by their bridles.

"A holdup!" exclaimed the driver, apparently greatly surprised.

The two guards grabbed their rifles, but at that moment there was a rush of masked and armed men from all sides.

"Hands up!" roared a stentorian voice, and Bud Dalton, also masked, stepped forward and covered one of the guards with his rifle, while Hickey covered the other.

On both sides several rifles were aimed at those inside the stage.

The surprise was complete, and the bandits had everything their own way.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ROAD TO FREEDOM.

"Turn out of the stage, every one of you," was the next command of Bud Dalton, in a tone that showed he would take no fooling.

Everybody realized that they were at the mercy of the bandits they had till that moment supposed were far away to the north, where depredations by them had recently been reported.

Resistance under the circumstances was unavailing, and all the victims of the holdup were presently lined up in the road under the guns of several of the bandits.

"Get the boxes of bullion out of the driver's box," said Dalton to Hickey, and that worthy quickly obeyed orders.

There were six boxes, and these were tumbled into the road, smashed open, and their contents distributed in the pouches brought for the purpose, the whole amount being divided as equally as possible among the rascals.

The mail bag was then taken off the stage, ripped open and the bunch of registered letters taken possession of by Dalton.

The bag was then thrown into the bushes.

"Now, boys, search the prisoners," cried the leader of the band.

As all hands had a bunch of money to spend at the ball, the rascals made a good haul in cash.

Dalton's next order was to tie all hands, and they were tied, Susanne and the other two girls having their hands secured behind their backs, while the men were trussed up hand and foot.

"Now, then," said Dalton, "we'll be off. Fetch up the horses."

The horses were brought.

Dalton sprang on his own animal.

"Hand me up that girl," indicating Susanne. "Tie a handkerchief around her mouth first."

Susanne was passed up to him and he placed her in front of him.

"Sam, you take charge of the boy."

Hickey mounted his horse and two of the bandits tied Dick on behind him.

"All ready?" cried Dalton.

"All ready, cap."

"Then forward at your best speed."

Dalton led the way down the pass, followed by his band.

When they struck the road outside they turned northward and sped along at high speed.

After an hour's ride they turned again into the mountains and then they went along at a more leisurely gait.

By paths that they knew better than any one else they penetrated deeper and deeper into the range till, as darkness fell upon the face of nature, a short halt was called to water the horses.

The gloom of the mountains did not seem to bother the bandits much, for they kept on without another halt for two hours more.

After resting twenty minutes the journey was resumed at a slower pace.

After a long ride they finally reached their rendezvous in the early hours of the morning, and the prisoners were then relieved of their gags.

This time they were not left together, but put in separate sections of the big underground cave that the bandits used as a hiding place.

All hands then turned in for a sleep, after two men were detailed as a guard to keep a bright watch until morning.

The situation of Susanne and Dick was not one to be envied.

They were once more prisoners in the hands of the bandits, and to make things worse, were unable to communicate with each other.

Dick felt particularly gloomy.

He believed that the bandits had brought him to their headquarters for the sole purpose of revenging themselves on him at their leisure.

He had no fear that Susanne would be injured, for he knew that the rascals had captured her for the ransom they expected she would bring from her wealthy father, who could afford to pay largely for her release.

While Dick was thinking of Susanne the poor girl was thinking of him and not of her own unfortunate position.

She knew he had been placed in the small adjoining cave, of which there were quite a number of such offshoots in the place.

The cave was entirely underground and reached by a narrow passage from the outside.

This passage terminated in a series of rough natural steps formed of boulders, and these led down into the main cave.

Illumination was furnished by lighted lanterns hung in different parts of the cave.

There was also a spot where the bandits sometimes built a fire.

The smoke escaped through a crack or rent in the roof. A good-sized side cave was used as a stable for the horses of the band.

The snores of the tired bandits reached Susanne's ears as she sat in sad contemplation of the unhappy situation in which she and Dick had so unexpectedly been placed.

"If I could only get my hands loose I would try to set Dick free at every hazard, and then maybe we could make our escape again from these villains," she said to herself.

The possibility of being able to help her young sweetheart urged her to make a persistent effort to free herself.

After a time she succeeded, to her great joy, for the bandit who tied her had not secured her too tight, for fear of hurting her.

As soon as her hands were free she got up and looked out into the main cave where the sleepers were.

Their rifles stood around the room in different spots, and one was within reach of her.

She took possession of it, and then made her way into the next cave, where Dick was secured.

"Dick," she whispered.

"Is that you, Susanne?" he said, in a low tone.

"Yes," she replied, approaching the spot whence his voice came from.

"I thought you were bound and secured in one of these caves."

"I was till a few minutes ago, when I freed myself from the rope."

"And now you've come to free me?"

"Yes."

"I'm afraid it won't help us much to be free, for I heard Dalton order two men to stand guard at the mouth of the cave, and we never can get by them."

"Maybe there is some other way of getting out."

"That isn't likely. If there was such a thing the bandit captain would have it guarded, too."

"Have you a knife in your pocket?" she asked.

"Yes. I always carry one."

"Which pocket is it in?"

"The right."

Susanne lost no time in getting it out, and inside of a minute Dick was free of his bonds.

"Seems to me I feel wind coming from somewhere," said the girl.

"So do I. There must be a crevice in the rocks that lets it in from the outside," he said. "That won't do us any good, though."

"Follow me and let us see where it comes from."

Susanne led the way in the dark, and presently they discovered that they were out of the small cave and in a narrow passage that sloped downward.

"Better let me go ahead," said Dick. "I've got some

matches and they will serve to light the way and see where we are going."

She let him precede her, and he at once struck a match.

It illuminated the passage for some way ahead, and the flame flickered in the draught that blew in their faces.

"This passage may carry us into the air," said the girl, hopefully.

"If so, it is funny it should be left unguarded," answered Dick.

"Maybe the bandit captain overlooked it in giving his orders. At any rate, he did not expect that we could free ourselves and go hunting for back passages. If it hadn't been for the draught we never would have been led into it."

"That's true. It would be great if we found our way to freedom this way," said Dick.

They hurried forward, the boy striking a match at intervals to see that there were no pitfalls in the way of their progress.

"This passage seems to go right down through the mountain," said Dick, after they had gone on several hundred yards. "If it wasn't for the draught which indicates an opening somewhere ahead, I would be afraid we were only going to the interior of the range, where escape would be impossible."

They went on for another hundred yards or more, making a couple of winding turns, and then they found their way barred by a mass of brush.

Dick caught Susanne by the hand and pushed his way through it.

In a few moments they found themselves in the open air, with the starry sky above their heads.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

Dick felt like shouting with satisfaction, but he was afraid to do it, for he could not tell just how far they were from the main entrance to the cave where the guards were.

He let off steam, however, by grabbing Susanne in his arms and giving her a hug and a kiss.

"Oh, my, how rough you are!" she cried, with a smile and a blush.

"I couldn't help it. I'm so tickled over our escape from that cave that I could jump out of my shoes. Now I wonder where we are? Seems to be a wooded ravine. The question is, which direction is it best for us to take. We've got to hustle to get as far away as possible before the bandits discover our escape and set out in pursuit."

They decided to take the downhill route.

As there was lots of brush in their path it proved hard traveling for Susanne, whose new dress, made for the ball, which had already been sadly rumpled, was soon torn into ribbons.

Clothes, however, didn't count in their flight, for their liberty, and perhaps Dick's life, hung on the fact of their getting clean off.

Sunrise found them several miles from the bandits' cave.

"The rascals have no doubt discovered our escape by this time, and I'll bet they're madder than a nest full of disturbed hornets," said Dick. "They are sure to scour the whole of the range within miles of the cave in order to

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recapture us, and we are likely to have a hard time avoiding them."

"We must do our best," replied Susanne.

"Well, you can bet we'll do that."

They continued on at the best pace Susanne was capable of, noting by the glow of the rising sun that they were going in the right direction to ultimately bring them out into the upper part of the level ground to the west of the range.

After another hour's walk Susanne was so tired that a halt was called for a rest.

They reclined on the ground for half an hour and then resumed their flight.

As morning advanced they felt the cravings of a pair of healthy appetites, for they hadn't eaten anything since their dinner at noon the day before.

The chances of getting anything to eat for some little time to come were small, so they had to bear their hunger as best they could.

Around noon they struck a well-defined road, somewhat to their surprise and satisfaction.

"I have no doubt but this will take us right out of the range, for it certainly is not here for fun. It must cross the mountains from one side to the other. It is possible we may meet with some friendly stranger who will give us a lift."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when they heard the sound of wagon wheels approaching them.

They did not attempt to hide, for they judged that the bandits were not provided with vehicles of any kind,

which was quite true, as such articles could not have been driven into the almost trackless wilds where they had their headquarters.

Pretty soon around the curve in the road came an empty wagon and a team of horses driven by a lone man.

"Here's a fine chance for us both to get a ride," said Dick in a tone of great satisfaction, for he knew that Susanne was almost done up.

"I'm so glad," replied the girl, with a weary little smile. Dick signaled the man to stop.

As he reigned in, the boy, to his surprise, recognized him as Mike O'Leary.

"Why, hello, Mike, is that you?"

"Sure it's me. And who are you, may I ask?" returned O'Leary.

"Don't you recognize me?"

The man looked hard at Dick.

"Are you the boy I brought over to the pass six months ago from Florence?" he said, doubtfully.

"I am that boy—Dick Alvord. I want you to give us a lift back to civilization. You don't seem to recognize this young lady, either, and I don't wonder, for she's quite a wreck. We've both been traveling through the brush down the mountain since before daylight."

"Why, how is that? Did you two get lost in the range?"

"No. I'll tell you all about it in a few minutes. Allow me to lift you up, Susanne. This is Susanne Long, daughter of Redrock's mining king."

Dick then entered into full particulars of the holdup,

and then described their ride, bound and gagged, to the cave of the bandits somewhere up the mountains.

After that he told how they managed to make their escape by way of a rear passage that let them out in a ravine down the mountain side.

"That was before sunrise, and we've been walking ever since, save for short spells of rest. It was mighty lucky for us that we struck this road. Neither of us knew anything about it, and it was just a lucky fluke that we hit it, and still more lucky that you came along with your wagon to give us a lift. Susanne is about done for in the walking line, and I don't know how we should have got along if you or some one else with a team hadn't come along," said Dick.

O'Leary said he was glad to be of service to them, and congratulated them over their escape from the rascally bandits.

An hour's ride carried them out of the range into the level country.

O'Leary said he'd take them to the ranch, where Mr. Mason and his family would give them a hearty welcome and fix them up in good shape. •

When O'Leary drove up to the ranch house Mr. Mason happened to be on hand, and he regarded Dick and the much-bedraggled Susanne with considerable curiosity, not dreaming who they were.

When he found out that the girl was the daughter of Redrock's mining king, and that the boy was Dick Alvord, famous throughout the county as the owner of the Red Crow silver mine, he was a much astonished man.

He called his wife and daughters and turned Susanne over to them, and took Dick to his own apartments, after ordering a meal to be prepared for them without delay.

Of course, Dick's story explained everything to the wealthy ranchman.

Susanne also told her story to Mrs. Mason and her two girls while attiring herself in a gown loaned to her and otherwise repairing damages with the help of the three women.

Half an hour after their arrival Dick and Susanne sat down to quite a spread in the dining-room, and both declared that a meal had never before tasted so good, for they were quite famished.

Mr. Mason sent a man on horseback to Redrock to notify Mr. Long that his daughter and Dick were safe at his home, where he intended to keep them for a few days.

Then, while Mrs. Mason and the girls laid themselves out to entertain Susanne, the ranch owner took Dick around his big property, and pointed out all his possessions of importance.

Dick and Susanne remained several days at the Mason ranch and enjoyed themselves greatly, after which O'Leary drove them in a carriage back to Redrock, where they were received with great enthusiasm.

Mr. Long sent for the sheriff of the county and had a strenuous talk with him.

"This bandit business has gone as far as I can stand it," he said. "I intend to see that those rascals are exterminated root and branch at once. They have kidnapped my daughter practically three times, and would have mulcted me in a large sum of money but for the courage of young Dick Alvord, who saved my child each time. Get

your posse together, and I will furnish at least two dozen well-armed men to help you. Alvord will go along with the expedition and try to pilot you to the present headquarters of the bandits. Capture the whole gang or shoot them down without mercy if they refuse to surrender. They have got to be cleaned out for good."

The sheriff agreed to do his best.

He collected a strong posse, and, reinforced with Mr. Long's men under Dick's command, the expedition started out to put the bandits out of business.

They came upon the band suddenly as the rascals were preparing to start for pastures new, being afraid to remain longer in the range after the escape of their two prisoners.

A fierce battle ensued between the two parties; but the attacking party meant business, and they had the gang cornered, so the result was that half of the band were killed or wounded, and the balance captured.

Hickey was discovered among the dead, while Dalton was one of the prisoners taken.

The dead were buried with little ceremony, and the rest carried to Florence, where they got a speedy trial and were sent to prison for twenty years each.

That ended the bandit menace in that part of Arizona to the satisfaction of all good citizens.

Dick continued to work his mine with great success, growing rapidly in wealth.

One day he asked Mr. Long for the hand of Susanne and got it, for the mining king was proud of the boy and considered he would prove a model son-in-law.

In due time the wedding came off, and the occasion was a gala day in Redrock.

Not a stroke of work was done that day in the mines.

Flags and bunting were displayed on all the buildings, and the whole town turned out to attend the wedding in the afternoon, which was held in the open air so that all might be present.

And what a send-off the pretty bride and popular groom got when they started for Florence en route for the East on their wedding tour!

It beat anything ever seen in Arizona before.

There was more shooting than is heard in a city of a Fourth of July.

In due time Dick and Susanne returned and settled down in a house that had been built for them, and Mr. Long went to live with them.

To-day Dick is one of the richest men in Arizona, and his money all came out of the Red Crow mine, where you might say he turned dust into good American dollars.

THE END.

Read "BILLY BLACK, THE BROKER'S SON; OR, THE WORST BOY IN WALL STREET," which will be the next number (220) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

A cocoanut was brought to me just as picked up in a Colombo garden, with the head of a big rat fixed into the nut, the rat being not long dead. Clearly the rat was up a tree, when the nut tumbled, and before the rat could withdraw it was crushed to death between the nut and the ground.

At the conclusion of a children's performance at Old Mel-drum an elephant proceeded along a narrow road with a pail in its trunk for the purpose of procuring water from a pump. A little girl chanced to get in the animal's way, and the road being only wide enough to accommodate his substantial body, the elephant laid down the pail, picked up the child with his trunk and gently lifted her to a place of safety, afterward resuming his journey to the pump for the water.

Green goods' agents have been stimulating the sale of their productions in the South, and the negroes "caught on" at once. Spurious money was offered at the rate of five for one. In one town the congregation of a negro church that wanted to clear off a debt raised \$1,000 and gave it to the pastor to go North to buy \$5,000 worth of the cheap money. When the transaction was completed, and the pastor had returned, he received by express the supposed package of money. He was shocked on opening it, when he found a nice little package of green paper faced with a genuine \$1 bill. A friend who witnessed his amazement says that the colored gentleman turned a little pale.

"Corn is king in America, and the cow is queen in Australia," remarked R. J. Guthrie, agricultural editor of the Sydney "Mail." "The cow has redeemed the country, and hundreds of farmers who lost nearly all they had by the drought of 1902 are now better off than they ever were, and it is all due to the cow. Australian butter ranks well up with the best butter in the world. Our butter-making is all done by the co-operative creamery system. It has been years since the farmer made butter on the farm. We have little use for a dual purpose cow in Australia. That is, the dairy farmer wants a cow that will give milk ten months in the year, and he uses it for no other purpose; while those who raise cattle for beef have no thought of milk production."

A successful farmers' institute, the first ever held in Alaska, has been in session at Seward, and it was attended by men from all parts of the surrounding agricultural district. Those present reported exceptional crops of hay and oats, the great

staples of that section of country. The feature of the meeting was the address of Levi Chubbuck, special agent of the Department of Agriculture, who is making surveys of land suitable for homesteads, and who assured his hearers that the successful growing of forage and root crops on land in that section of Alaska, with an aggregate area of 1,000 square miles, was practically assured. The 1,000 square miles which has thus been surveyed, and on which it is assured that forage and root crops can be successfully cultivated, would furnish 4,000 homestead claims, which is rather more than the aggregate amount of claims awarded in the recent land lottery held in Spokane. In the Spokane lottery there were nearly two hundred thousand applicants for a chance to get claims, and the vast majority were doomed in advance to disappointment. The 4,000 Alaska homestead claims are ready for any one to take up who cares to do so, without taking any chances on a lottery. The first choice goes to the man first on the ground, and there is no rush of applicants. The farmers' institute at Seward serves to bring out anew the fact that farming is a pursuit that can be successfully followed in that country. In the neighborhood of Seward the climate is mild. The market demands of Alaska are far ahead of any possibility of their being supplied by local products for many years in the future.

JOKES AND JESTS.

"Did your new chauffeur turn out all right?" "No; that's why he's in the hospital."

Mrs. Bart—My husband got a letter to-day saying something dreadful would happen if he didn't send the writer a sum of money. Mrs. Smart—My husband gets dunned for his bills, too.

"Which do you like de best," said Meandering Mike, "de city or de country?" "Well," answered Plodding Pete, "de closeness together of de houses in town makes it convenient. But I likes de country because dere's just about walkin' enough to give you an appetite between handouts."

A baseball enthusiast took his wife to the ball game. That night the "fan" was awakened from his slumber by his better half shouting in her dreams: "Kill the umpire!" Half asleep he sprang out of bed, and in doing so knocked over the washstand. The crash awoke Mrs. "Fan." "Did you kill the umpire, John?" "No," replied John, angrily. "But I smashed the pitcher."

A little girl was in the habit of telling awful "stretchers." Her auntie told her she could never believe her; and, to warn her, related the tale of the boy who called "Wolf, wolf," and how the wolf really did come one day and ate up all the sheep. "Ate the sheep?" asked the child. "Yes." "All of them?" "Yes, all of them," said the auntie. "Well," said the little one, "I don't believe you, and you don't believe me. So there!"

"I had a big surprise to-day," said a bellboy in a Denver hotel. "This mornin' I was called to a woman's room to bring her some writin' paper. When I handed it to her she slipped me a dime. 'It's for cigarettes,' she says. 'Much obliged,' I says, droppin' the coin in my pocket. 'I'll spend it for cigars; I don't smoke cigarettes.' 'Well, I don't care what you smoke,' she says. 'Those cigarettes are for me.' And I got 'em fer her, too."

THE SMUGGLERS

By Col. Ralph Fenton.

Ned Wilson was one of the best men I ever had in my employ.

I had detailed him for work on many very important cases, and he had always done his duty faithfully.

He had no bad habits, and was possessed of about equal parts of those two most important qualities in a detective—caution and courage.

He was unmarried, and seemed to care little for the society of women, being indissolubly wedded to his profession.

I did not know, when I sent him to Rocky Beach to try and locate the base of operations and secure the arrest of a most daring band of smugglers, that he was madly in love with pretty Ella Waters, a boarder at the Sea Girt House, and that his devotion to her would cause him to neglect his work.

It all turned out right in the end, however, and as Ned and Ella are happily married now, there can be no impropriety in printing the story as it was told by Ned himself.

Early in the spring of the present year, information was lodged with the secret service department that a bold and skillful band of smugglers were carrying on their illegal business by means of several lines of ocean smugglers.

Some of the best detectives were put to work on the case.

They traced the goods, which were principally expensive silks and laces, from the warehouses of foreign manufacturers to the trunks of the smugglers aboard the homebound steamers.

The smugglers were kept under surveillance during the voyage, and their baggage was overhauled as soon as port was reached, and they attempted to land; but in no instance were any concealed goods found, and the smugglers, growing bolder, resented the interference of the officers, and talked loudly of bringing a suit for damages.

It was evident that the goods were secretly removed from the steamer before port was reached.

Where their removal took place, and how it was done, I was instructed to find out, and for several weeks I had my best men at work on the case.

They made no discoveries, and the custom house was being daily defrauded.

I was in despair.

My failure in apprehending the smugglers placed my position in jeopardy, and the chief began to threaten.

Finally, an accident placed me in possession of an important clew.

Some of the smuggled goods were traced to Rocky Beach, and it was ascertained that the chief of the smugglers had a cottage there, which he occupied with his family.

I felt jubilant over this discovery.

The great ocean steamers passed within a few miles of the beach, and it was evident that the smuggled goods were surreptitiously removed in passing.

I cabled the facts to one of my men stationed abroad, and instructed him to shadow the next one of the band who took passage, and to keep him in sight night and day.

I arranged that he should signal to another man, whom I stationed with a steam launch on the shore at Rocky Beach, if the smugglers should attempt to throw overboard any packages of goods, and the latter was instructed to be on the lookout, and as soon as he should see the signal to put off and secure the criminals in the very act.

I felt satisfied that an important arrest would soon be made.

My man abroad cabled one day that he would take passage the following day on the Ocean Queen, and that one of his fellow-passengers was a member of the band, and that his trunks were undoubtedly filled with valuable goods which were liable to import duty.

I communicated with my man at Rocky Beach, and when the steamer passed he saw the signal agreed upon, and immediately headed toward the steamer in the launch, with a crew of determined men on board.

The launch was provided with a powerful electric light, and when its rays were thrown upon the surrounding water objects could be seen for a considerable distance in every direction.

It disclosed no boat, however, and although they cruised up and down the beach until daylight, no smuggled goods were landed.

The man aboard the steamer reported to me, as follows:

"Obedient to your instructions, per cable, I secured the services of a skilled assistant, and we two never lost sight of the supposed smuggler for a moment, except when he was in his stateroom. I was on watch when we passed Rocky Beach and am satisfied—although, owing to the fact that the fellow was in his stateroom, I did not catch him in the act—that several packages of lace, in water-tight rubber bags, were thrown overboard."

The next steamer that arrived had among its passengers a smuggler and one of my men.

When the vessel passed Rocky Beach the signal agreed upon went up from the deck of the steamer, and the steam launch, with its electric light streaming out over the water, made a thorough search for the boat of the smugglers.

As before, no boat was discovered, and I was puzzled.

When, after six repeated trials by my men, the smugglers pitched overboard packages which mysteriously disappeared as soon as they touched the water, I detailed Ned Wilson to take hold of the case, and he went to Rocky Beach.

He was too conscientious to wholly neglect his business, but he paid pretty Ella Waters a great deal of attention, and steamer after steamer passed, signal after signal went up, and the steam launch made cruise after cruise.

In spite of these efforts, however, no goods were seized, and no smugglers were arrested.

Wilson found time between the intervals of love-making to do one piece of good work.

He made the acquaintance of the supposed chief of the smugglers, and was invited to his cottage to dinner.

He visited his new acquaintance several times, and had opportunity to carefully search his house in the hope of finding smuggled articles.

He found nothing, but he did learn that the smuggler was very intimate with a lobster fisherman, whose little sloop was always either at anchor in a small cliff-sheltered cove above the hotel, or "lying off and on" the beach.

He began to watch the lobster fisherman, an old-fashioned, horny-handed waterman, who had lived there all his life; but finally Ned came to the conclusion that he was honest itself, and that his relations with the smuggler chief were not illicit.

Every night Ned made love to pretty Ella on the veranda of the hotel, and on one occasion allowed a steamer to pass and signal him without getting out the launch.

He determined never to be caught napping again; and thereafter he did his love-making on a tree-shaded knoll some distance away, from the summit of which he could see far out upon the ocean.

It is my opinion that the lovers paid little attention to the passage of time, and one night, when they parted, and Ella ran up the porch stairs to go to her room, it was past midnight.

Her room was on the second floor, and she usually entered it through a window which opened upon the porch.

The bed she occupied was an old-fashioned, high-posted affair, and stood with its tall headboard facing the window.

As Ella approached the window this night her eyes were fixed upon the bed, and she saw, standing out in bold relief upon the polished surface of the headboard, the crouching figure of a man.

A cry of terror escaped her, and she started back.

Instantly the shadow disappeared.

She looked quickly over her shoulder, but there was no one behind her; and after a moment's hesitation, she peered into the room again.

Once more the crouching figure was revealed to her frightened eyes, but when she drew back it disappeared.

It was evident that a man, bent on robbery, murder or both, was concealed in her room, and hastily lowering the window, she turned to leave the porch.

Ned was walking slowly away from the foot of the steps along one of the gravel paths.

She called to him softly.

He came toward her quickly.

"What's the matter, dear?" he asked.

"Come up here—quick!" she whispered, bending over the balcony. "There's a man in my room."

At this startling intelligence Ned rushed up the steps and soon stood beside the trembling girl.

"Where is the villain?" he demanded, in a hoarse whisper.

"I saw the shadow of his crouching form on the headboard of my bed when I opened the window," she answered. "Oh, Ned, be careful!"

"I'll fix him!" was the answer, and, drawing his revolver, Ned stepped to the window and threw it open.

As he thrust his head into the room, his eyes were fixed upon the headboard, and he plainly saw the shadow of a crouching figure.

"Ha!" he cried. "Now I've got you!" and he leaped into the room.

He lit the gas, and peered into every corner, under the bed, behind the bureau, and into a large wardrobe.

He found no midnight assassin concealed anywhere, and laughing a little sheepishly, he turned out the gas, and stepped out through the window.

"There's no man in there, Ella," he said. "The shadow we saw must have been our own."

Thus assured, Ella approached the window, but she could not keep her eyes off the headboard, and again the crouching figure was revealed to her.

"Oh, Ned!" she cried, "I saw it again. There is someone inside. I know there, is."

Wilson walked to the window, and stood beside her.

"It's your own shadow," he said. "Now we'll look in together, and there'll be two shadows."

But there were not.

Only the same crouching figure was for an instant revealed to them, and this time Ned noticed a sou'-wester on his head.

He cocked his revolver, and with his eyes fixed upon the headboard, strained his ears to catch the faintest sound which would give him a clew to the man's hiding place.

Suddenly the figure appeared, and he had a good view of it.

A cry of amazement escaped him, and quickly withdrawing his head, he ran to the balcony and looked out toward the rock-sheltered cove, on the extreme point of whose further promontory was perched a lighthouse with a revolving light.

"Ella," he cried, excitedly, "go to the window and tell me when the shadow appears. Don't start when you see it, and notice if it doesn't show itself at regular intervals."

She did as bidden, and Ned's face glowed with grim triumph, as he made careful note of the position of the lighthouse, and learned from Ella's whispered reports of the appearance and disappearance of the shadowy figure on the headboard, that its movements were governed by the revolving light.

"Ella," he said, finally—and she noticed that he was very much excited—"I've discovered the smugglers;" and his voice sank to a whisper as he explained to her what he had learned. "Now go to bed like a good girl. There is no man concealed in your room."

In ten minutes' time, aided by his ready assistants, a boat had been launched, and they were pulling swiftly across the dark water toward the lighthouse.

Ned, with a revolver tightly grasped in his hand, stood in the bow.

Suddenly the dark outlines of a boat loomed up in front of him, and he saw plainly revealed the same crouching figure that he had seen on the headboard of the bed in Ella's room.

It was the old lobster fisherman, Jim Jobson, and he was busily engaged hauling something out of the water.

"Surrender!" cried Ned, as the two boats came together, and he leaped into Jobson's craft and thrust his revolver into the old fisherman's face.

He threw up his hands with sullen reluctance, and a pair of handcuffs were snapped on his wrists.

In his boat were nearly a dozen compactly filled rubber bags, which, when opened, were found to contain hundreds of dollars worth of silks and laces.

He confessed everything; the chief of the band was arrested in bed, and finding that Jobson had betrayed him, he broke down completely, gave the names of his assistants, and told the officers where quantities of the smuggled goods were stored.

Jobson's lobster-fishing habits were made use of only as a blind.

The smugglers aboard the steamers made their goods up into compact bundles, and inclosed them in weighted rubber bags, which sank to the bottom as soon as they were thrown overboard.

To each bag was attached a long line, ending in a small buoy.

They could be dropped out of the ports of a steamer without attracting observation.

The next day Jobson would sail over the steamer's course, find the buoys, and mark well their location.

At night he would repeat the operation, but this time the submerged bags would be raised and taken aboard his little sloop.

Whenever he ran into the cove he got rid of his cargo by throwing the bags overboard among his lobster pots, and our keenest men were unable to detect him.

Unfortunately for him and his confederates this night he had been at work in a small boat, between the lighthouse and the hotel, collecting a number of the bags for his employer.

When the revolving light was turned toward the shore, his crouching figure was caught up, and, as it were, photographed on the polished headboard of Ella Waters' bed.

I loaded Ned with praise, but he was honest enough to confess that he would probably never have made the capture had he not partially neglected his duty to make love to Ella.

Of course I was overjoyed at the capture of the smugglers, all of whom were arrested, convicted and are now serving out long sentences.

I was introduced to the young lady the night they were married, and didn't blame him much, for she was lovely enough to set any man by the ears.

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